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27 March 1984

NEAR EAST/SOUTH ASIA REPORT

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ARMENIAN AFFAIRS

TEHRAN PRELATE INTERVIEWED ON ARMENIAN NATIONAL, SOCIAL AFFAIRS

Tehran ALIK in Armenian 29-31 Jan 84

[Three-part interview with Tehran Prelate Archbishop Artak S. Manukian; date and place not specified: "Interview With the Holy Father on National-Social Questions"]

[29 Jan 84 pp 1, 2]

[Text] We interviewed the Tehran Armenian Diocesan Prelate, His Eminence Archbishop Artak S. Manukian, on problems and matters of concern to the Persian Armenians, as well as community matters, which we publish below.

[Question] For about a month now we have received no information on the status of the Armenian schools, nor has any information been published. Could you tell us what is the current status of the teaching of religion in Armenian schools and the teaching of subjects in the Armenian language?

[Answer] This question concerning the Armenian schools is very appropriate. Although no information has been reported to the community of late, this does not mean that nothing is being done. Meetings continue with the appropriate government agencies, especially the Ministry of Education, and necessary explanations are being given. We are optimistic about a positive outcome. The public is aware that our meetings which were held a few months ago opened the way for new proposals, and such proposals were made on behalf of the Dioceses: to validate teaching of the Armenian language, and to reach an agreement that religious teaching be taught in the Armenian language and that students study religious teaching using textbooks adopted by the three Dioceses, and if the presented material is not contrary to the teachings of our church, it shall be taught as ethics. Talks discussing this proposal are continuing, and new proposals are being made. As we have stated, we have the hope and expectation that we shall reach a meeting of the minds, substantiating our views and principles and guaranteeing the teaching of the Armenian language as well as the teaching of religion in the Armenian language. In reply to the second part of the question, it must be said that the same status does not prevail at all schools. Some schools are continuing as before, while difficulties are being experienced in some schools, where even Armenian is being removed from the curriculum. In some places only 2 hours of Armenian are being permitted, while in certain schools religion is not being taught at all. Sometimes it is maintained

that religion should be taught in Persian, but as we have stated, this applies to certain schools. There is no uniformity throughout the schools. No public statements are being made in this regard, but work is continuing, and we expect to reach a fundamental agreement that officials of the Ministry of Education will not intervene on an individual basis, so that individual officials will not, according to whim, give orders that so many class hours of Armenian may be taught at a certain school, and that so much religion may be taught. What we are seeking is a uniform policy. Past proposals are being studied, new proposals are being made, and we are waiting to reach a fundamental and final agreement. This is in general the current situation regarding the schools.

[Question] We were informed about elections to the 11th Assembly of Deputies only through the press, that the elections are going to be postponed, but nothing has been reported to date. Can you give us some information about that?

[Answer] In order to answer this question, we should go back to the conditions under which the elections to the Assembly of Deputies took place on the last occasion. It was 4 years ago that the community was informed that elections to the Assembly of Deputies would take place. After that elections assumed a provisional character. The first meeting of the Assembly of Deputies was held, at which the delegates stated that pursuant to instructions, the Assembly of Deputies was provisional, that it had the responsibility to amend new Diocesan regulations, and that after going through all administrative stages new elections would take place. The Diocesan Council which was elected at that Assembly of Deputies was also of a provisional nature, but the provisional designation was extended, especially for the Diocesan Council, which had a 2-year term, and the Diocesan Council has already completed 4 years. Regulations were amended. It went through the administrative stages, was ratified by the National General Assembly, and was made official by the Holy Patriarch, and elections to the Assembly of Deputies shall be held according to the regulations. The Ministry of Internal Affairs made certain formal and administrative rulings. When it was announced in the press that elections for the Assembly of Deputies would be held, the candidates published their names: the Central Commission which was going to organize the elections did its work and announced the date of the elections, but it was subsequently postponed. The postponement was due to certain questions voiced by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, which subsequently were presented in written form: replies were submitted to these questions, and we are sure that they will satisfy the Ministry of Internal Affairs. It took some time to provide a complete reply to some of the questions. We are now proceeding in the direction of holding elections, and the Ministry of Internal Affairs is also pursuing the matter, and we are expecting authorization to hold the elections. Basically there is no problem: the elections must take place; the only matter in question is of a formal, administrative nature: certain circumstances and matters have been addressed, replies have been submitted, and we hope that in coming days news will be announced to the community. The date of election will also be decided because, as the community is aware, not only has the time for the convening of the Assembly of Deputies passed, but also for the Diocesan Council. The provisional Diocesan Council has been in office for 4 years now, and we can state that work pertaining to the Diocesan Council continues with the same speed.

[30 Jan 84 p 2]

[Text] [Question] Elections to Iran's Islamic Parliament are approaching. What can you tell us about that?

[Answer] Ordinarily parliamentary elections are of a political and civic nature. The fact is that until now the national prelacy has not become involved in any way, not only here but in all dioceses. And now close collaboration is taking place only with elected delegates, and the elected delegate himself considers himself a representative of the Armenians and works closely with the prelacy and the administrative meetings. The law states that the Armenian community shall elect two delegates in the forthcoming Iranian elections. According to the election rules, the candidates must submit their names, and balloting shall express the people's will. As the old saying goes: "The voice of many, the voice of God." This is the way elections take place. It is the same for the candidates to our parliamentary assembly, because there are also quite a few candidates, and it remains only for the people to cast their vote.

[Question] What can you say about the verdict in the trial of Hampig Sassounian?

[Answer] All I know about it is what I have read in the press. Apparently the trial took place in a completely different atmosphere and environment and under certain pressures: it was as if the verdict had been determined in advance, and that the trial was not for the purpose of bringing out the truth. Generally when there is a trial and there are judges, these judges are answerable primarily to their own conscience and to God. Our only question is: did justice prevail? Did they pronounce a correct verdict? What does their conscience say? To what extent did they listen to the voice of justice? Personal and governmental interference can move court proceedings away from justice, and what then is the fate of law and justice? This is what particularly strikes us. We do not know if an appeal is being considered. We must wait and seek to learn further details. But from what we have learned from the press, justice and the voice of justice is lacking. Yes, the law is above all things, under the condition that the law is applied in a proper manner, that the law is respected by those who apply it, and the question is whether they seek to force their own whims on the court. The law is respected and the criminal is found guilty, under the condition that justice occurs, by means of putting things in their proper place and in a right manner. As far as we know from what we have heard, one important fact was not presented to the court, concerning Sassounian's guilt or innocence.

[31 Jan 84 p 2]

[Text] [Question] What do you have to say about the harmful phenomenon of emigration by Persian Armenians and the danger of assimilation which threatens them in distant lands?

[Answer] We have had the opportunity at an earlier date to express our opinions concerning that. At the initial stages of the revolution, there was panic, and certain people thought about emigration and in fact did leave the country. This situation was a matter of concern for everybody, regardless of who went to what countries and what they were planning to do there, and what future awaited them

and especially their children. To date we do not have precise figures on how many Persian Armenians have emigrated to various countries in Europe and the United States, but we believe, and based on the information we have, we can state that everybody's thoughts are here with us, but the simple fact is that physically they are there. The fact is that Persian Armenians have settled in foreign lands, and still others are possibly thinking about emigrating as well. But several basic questions arise, especially since we always stress that from the standpoint of the future of our people, the Middle East, and especially the Islamic countries are the best places to preserve our language and nationality. It is true that in a number of countries in the Middle East revolutions have taken place and these revolutions engender certain difficulties for the ethnic minorities. There are a number of difficulties: one is the difficulty which applies to the entire people, regardless of whether it is an ethnic minority or majority, while other difficulties affect the minorities. But our history attests that our people and other peoples have experienced situations which have perhaps involved even worse conditions. And if one reads Persian Armenian history, which is now translated into modern Armenian, one notes the difficulties and stages the Persian Armenians have gone through. We have been called a people which has had the courage to do something about those difficulties; we have been considered a people of will and a hardworking people. We feel that all difficulties are of a temporary and passing nature. The main thing is the people, who will be able to endure and have the courage to stand up to these difficulties: after all, not everything in life is smooth or goes the way we wish it to go -- there are ups and downs in the life of an individual and in the life of peoples as well. The people and the individual must be prepared to face both good times and bad, in order to enjoy the good times on the one hand and on the other to struggle and achieve their rights through the power of will. If we do not approach the matter in this way, various thoughts and attitudes will come forth. Perhaps one considers living as an individual, independent of national thoughts, Armenian and Armenian-like thoughts. He thinks about going some place to live, to be far from difficulties and to lead a sheltered life for himself: of course everywhere there are difficulties, and he should not think that where he goes there will be no difficulties. Life is not smooth anywhere, and it is possible that conditions will become more difficult. Others think about their children, or may have thought about our future being gloomy. But in addition to all the above, it is essential to think about the principal interests of the people: the mass of the people is important. Persian Armenians have experienced many upheavals in the past: in the past the homeland was occupied by foreigners, and the Armenian people fell prisoners in their own homeland, or for various reasons emigrated from their homeland. We have this experience from history, that the conditions of those times do not prevail today. Today things are different; once the migrations of the Armenian people occurred within the borders of their own land: as Persian Armenians went from one city in Iran to another, the number of Armenians grew. Today conditions are quite different. What concerns us is assimilation. The first decade can be a sacrifice, but the second and third are of concern to us. We are speaking particularly about Persian Armenians, because the Persian Armenians, with great sacrifices, created churches, schools, and a cultural life in Iran. The Persian Armenians not only mixed with the Iranian people but also created a status, so that we also often ask the same question: are Persian Armenians a part of the homeland or of the Diaspora, for when one speaks about life in the Diaspora in

general, very seldom is one referring to the Persian Armenians. And as regards the homeland, from a geographical standpoint the Persian Armenian is not in the homeland. Consequently the Persian Armenian is living neither in the Diaspora nor in the homeland. The Persian Armenians stand astride the two. It is to the credit of the Persian Armenians that throughout the centuries they have kept their language: the language spoken in the family has always been Armenian, and today as well national traditions and customs are strongly preserved among the Persian Armenians. And we do not consider to be a permanent situation the difficulties with education which face us today. A great deal of work is being done to resolve them. It is true that during these past 3 years we have been unable to resolve matters from the standpoint of basic principles, but we have done what was possible in this direction. We know that certain decisions were made which jeopardized the very foundation of our schools, but were unable to prevent their implementation, and today we have the hope and confidence that we shall be able to reach a fundamental agreement and that our schools will once again be placed in the service of the Armenian community. Consequently emigration is an alarming phenomenon in our opinion. I am sure that it is also an alarming thing for the emigrés: the decision to leave one's home is no easy matter. To leave and establish oneself elsewhere -- for what? The mass of the people are here, and the main thing for us is the people with their principal institutions. It is our wish, desire, and appeal that our people stay here and surround themselves with their national-religious-educational concerns. Wherever one might go, good things do not await one; they should remain right here to build their life, because the interests of our people are to remain here.

8817

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PROSPECTS FOR DIALOGUE WITH SYRIA DISCUSSED

London AL-MAJALLAH in Arabic No 207, 28 Jan-3 Feb 84 p 21

[Article by Wahid 'Abd-al-Majid: "Will Contacts between Cairo and Damascus Be Established? Three Indicators for Dialogue between Egypt and Syria"]

[Text] When Syria's President Hafiz al-Asad met with U.S. envoy Donald Rumsfeld in Damascus last January 13, questions were raised again about contacts between Egypt and Syria. Some observers wondered whether that meeting had been preceded by unannounced contacts between Cairo and Damascus.

Talk about these contacts began a few months ago when concrete changes were noticed in the tone of Egyptian and Syrian officials and in newspapers in Cairo and Damascus. At the same time Dr Butrus Ghali, minister of state for foreign affairs affirmed that Egypt was ready to talk with Syria about questions for a peaceful settlement in the area. AL-MAJALLAH has learned from sources in Egypt's Ministry of Foreign Affairs that no official contacts between the two capitals had taken place yet. Nevertheless, it is obvious that there are strong indications that it is possible that such contacts may begin soon. Among these indications is the fact that Egypt, despite its full support for 'Arafat, did not attack Palestinian organizations with close ties to Damascus--al-Sa'iqah, the Popular Front, the general command and the Front of the People's Struggle--during the battles of Tripoli between 'Arafat and those who oppose him. Observers noticed that attacks launched by some Egyptian newspapers against independent Palestinian organizations--the Popular Front, the Democratic Front and the Palestine Liberation Front--were considerably stronger than those attacks on Palestinian organizations associated with Syria. It seems that this position is part of the current Egyptian trend to smooth over matters with Damascus. Also Syria's position was flexible when contacts were being made to reinstate Egypt as member of the Islamic Conference Organization on the eve of the fourth Islamic Summit. That was the first time for Syria to assume such a position toward Egypt's participation in Arab or Islamic meetings since Camp David.

A Positive Climate

In addition to that, there was the climate of al-Asad's 13 January meeting with Rumsfeld. That was the first Syrian-American meeting to be described by observers as providing new impetus to the reconciliation between the two countries. Statements made by the spokesman for the Syrian presidential palace gave that impression. The spokesman indicated in particular that al-Asad had assured Rumsfeld

that the United States could play a positive role in bringing about peace in the Middle East if it were to take a more neutral position. This is confirmed by statements about the possibility of a summit conference between the Syrian president and the American president sometime in February. But a more important question remains: If there are encouraging indications that contacts between Egypt and Syria are likely to take place, what are the real possibilities for such contacts? In other words, are there common grounds now between the Egyptian and Syrian positions on whose bases the contacts could begin?

About 2 years ago a well-known American professor, Malcolm Kerr, a specialist in Middle East affairs and author of the well-known book, "The Arab Cold War"--Professor Kerr was assassinated in Beirut a few days ago--said, "The real difference between President al-Asad and President al-Sadat is that the former strives to achieve his objective by means of a hard-line approach, whereas the second achieved his objective by making concessions." In the opinion of Dr Kerr, the objective is the same: regaining the occupied land, the Golan and Sinai. If the principal objective of Syria's policy now is to regain the occupied Golan Heights, then the motives for Syria's actions in the area during the past period are understandable. Syria's position is governed by its considerations of Israel's and the United States' positions.

Between Two Positions

Israel's position on the Golan is well-known. Israel has been determined to annex the Golan ever since the Knesset resolution was issued on 14 December 1981 applying Israeli laws on the Golan. What matters is that the Golan is like Jerusalem: there is no disagreement among Israeli parties about its annexation. This was affirmed by Shimon Perez, leader of the opposition Labor Party. Perez had expressed reservations about the timing of the Knesset resolution annexing the Golan. The U.S. position, ever since Washington has been singlehandedly leading the settlement process, has involved efforts to keep Syria out of the settlement game. This is confirmed by a review of all U.S. ideas on the settlement, the most important of which is the Reagan initiative which was issued on 1 September 1982. In view of that Syria adopted a plan that may be described as one "of combining all options" and turning them into tools to be used to apply pressure to the United States in particular.

The Syrian government carried out this plan at the following centers: [it exploited] the civil war in Lebanon to take advantage of the historical relations between Syria and Lebanon, and it took advantage of the fact that the official authority in Beirut had provoked the armed struggle within the Fatah movement. This would enable the Syrians to get firmer control of the PLO. Syria sided with Iran in the war between Iraq and Iran, and Syria thus became qualified as the Arab party that could contact the Khomeyni government when the need for such contact arises.

The general course governing Syrian policy on these fronts is the attempt to maintain a number of controlled explosive situations in the area to persuade Washington that U.S. interests require dealing with these situations and that dealing with them will become difficult if Syria is kept out of the picture. The ultimate objective of this course is to prevent the attainment of a final arrangement for the area's problems without Syria. In the context of this plan also Syria

tried to reinforce its military strike force to use it as another pressure tool. Syria succeeded in scoring an important point against Israel and the United States: its air defense forces shot down a few U.S. and Israeli planes, and it took a U.S. pilot prisoner. Syria did not release the pilot until U.S. presidential candidate Jackson intervened to embarrass Reagan in front of U.S. public opinion.

It seems that Cairo began to understand that Syrian position. Therefore, official Egyptian statements made last month, particularly after 'Arafat's visit to Cairo, included clear indications of the importance of Syria's role. If these indications are being given out of an understanding of the nature of Syria's position, it is likely then that there are common grounds for the contacts between Egypt and Syria. But this does not necessarily imply that these contacts will actually succeed.

8592

CSO: 4504/191

SHARP CONTRASTS IN SOCIETY UNDERSCORED

London AL-MAJALLAH in Arabic No 207, 28 Jan-3 Feb 84 pp 31-33

[Article: "While Mubarak Tries To Repair What al-Sadat Ruined, Egypt Today Is a World of Social Contradictions under the Largest Development Plan; Charitable Cemeteries for the Poor and Others for the Pets of the Wealthy!"]

[Text] Khalid Muhyi-al-Din: "The political map in Egypt will be changed after the elections."

The founder of al-Ummah Party is still looking for someone to head the party.

Like any country in the world, Egypt bid farewell to 1983 to start a new year in its 7,000-year old life. Unlike other countries, however, the facts of life in Egypt are different from what they are in other countries. Egypt is starting a new year even as it continues to hold on to the contradictions of many bygone years. Opposites exist simultaneously, in the same place and in the same area. High-rise apartment buildings hide diffidently behind emergency housing, and mule drawn carts crowd the most luxurious kinds of cars. Al-Azhar Street, which saw the Cairo of the Fatimids, has been disemboweled as it awaits the rails of the subway system. Charitable cemeteries, where the bereft and destitute are buried, are not too far from the pet cemetery where wealthy pet owners pay large sums of money to bury their pets.

So much for the place. As far as people and time are concerned, things are not much different. Some people here in Cairo are still mulling over memories of the days of Mrs Munirah al-Mahdiah. No other voice pleases them like hers. These people still insist on wearing fezzes. Others, however, stuff themselves in tight jeans and sway to the sounds of disco music. There are people who insist on using tools and machines that the world has relegated to glass cages in museums, while some of Cairo's residents have become quite adept at using computers.

There are also those modest women who blush when a man, any man, looks at them; and there are women who have entered the employment market and who strongly refuse to go back to the home.

Everything is engulfed in black smoke in the narrow shop at the end of al-Azhar Street: the walls, the doors and the clothes of 'Amm Jabir, the owner of the

shop. When we stopped in front of the shop, the hands of the clock indicated that it was twelve o'clock, noon. At first, 'Amm Jabir did not notice us because he was preoccupied with the bellows he was pumping to light the fire which is the foundation for his work: shining copper utensils.

[We asked him], "How old are you, 'Amm Jabir?" It were as though we had pushed the talk button in 'Amm Jabir's head. The man started to talk as though he had not talked for scores of years.

He is 72 years old although his appearance does not suggest that he is that old at all. He has been working in that profession since he was a child, following in the footsteps of his father and grandfather, and he also inherited the shop. "Because," as he said, "people today are not like people yesterday," 'Amm Jabir has become part of the past; he has become a "has-been." People are no longer interested in what is authentic. "What matters to them is speed. It no longer matters to them that they purchase copper utensils that give food that is cooked in them an enjoyable flavor." They are satisfied with aluminum containers which, according to him, "boil the food and take away its flavor and its aroma." From 'Amm Jabir's point of view all of life now is [like food that is] boiled and cooked quickly. It cannot be savored, smelled or enjoyed. Everything is done so quickly that people do not know where they are going.

The camera turns right and left in what people in the movies and television call a panoramic sweep. 'Amm Jabir stands in the background of these pictures, unbent by the long years of his life. Scores of meters away from 'Amm Jabir's shop, in one of the narrow streets of al-Ghuriyah stands another person whose name is Ibrahim Hasan Ibrahim. He is another example of the old days to which he is tied by age as well as by profession. He was born in 1912, that is, he is 72 years old. He is the last living maker of fezzes.

Ibrahim said, "I was 12 years old when I started working in this profession. I was paid 6 piasters a week, and there were more than 300 shops that made fezzes in Cairo alone. Everybody wore a fez. It was not possible for anyone to report to work without a fez or go to court and stand in front of the judge with his head uncovered. Does this make sense? The best fez used to cost 50 piasters. That was the fez worn by pashas. But an ordinary fez cost between 25 and 35 piasters. The wool came from Austria, the palm leaves [that were used for interfacing] came from Indonesia, and the leather for the lining came from Belgium. We used to make the fezzes in Egypt. I progressed from a wage-earning craftsman to a store owner, but the times changed on me and fezzes are no longer being worn. I have two sons neither of whom learned the profession. I personally worked for the government for a period of time until I became 60 years old. Then I went back to making fezzes for the sake of the few people who adhere to old customs or for tourists who like to wear fezzes."

"Do you really wish for the old days to come back?"

It were as though a glass of iced water had been spilled over the man's head. He blinked his eyes and said, "The days of old! May God have mercy on the good old days! The good old days are never coming back."

Black and White

Taking a quick corner, the camera surveyed the scene as it moved to the right, shifting from commiserating old Cairo to Garden City where Mrs Sumayyah Mustafa al-Tayr is employed at one of the investment companies. Mrs Sumayyah is one of eight male and female students who were the first to graduate from the Computer Department of the College of Engineering 4 years ago. She is 27 years old, married, and has one son. Mrs Sumayyah said, "I have been working in my field since I graduated. Before that, I was employed in a public sector company. My colleagues and I had been charged with the task of introducing the computer system for the first time in that company. I am proud to say that this company, which I left 2 years ago, is still using the same program I wrote for its computer. I changed jobs to work in the investment sector not because it is more comfortable. Quite the opposite, work hours here are longer and the commitment is greater. However, the salary is bigger, and the experience I can gain here is even greater. In the computer field a person is evaluated only on the basis of the amount of information he acquires and the skills and capabilities he has. Of course I am opposed to women going back to the home even though working women put up with a great deal to take care of their homes and at the same time do a good job. I came to work yesterday, [for example], after having had only a few hours of sleep because my child had a stomach ache.

"Computers are magical; they can perform several complex operations simultaneously, and they can store a great deal of information."

Sumayyah has learned and mastered this modern art. It is possible that in the near future she will become one of the experts in the field in Egypt or perhaps in the Middle East. She is truly a splendid model of Egyptian womanhood.

A Flower at a Grave

The camera made a quick turn, and there on the largest spot of green in the heart of Cairo, in al-Jazirah Club, stood a girl. We did not find out what her name was because she was preoccupied. She was standing in front of a grave in Cairo's most curious cemetery, and she was weeping with emotion. "My dear Lucy, no matter how many years go by, you are always with me." These were words from the heart written by the tormented girl on the grave stone of her beloved Lucy, the dear, departed creature whose bark filled the girl's world. Yes, she barked. There is nothing shameful about that. The dear, late Lucy was this girl's dog. According to the instructions of Chief 'Abd-al-Rahim, custodian of the pet cemetery, she had paid no less than 15 pounds and perhaps more to bury her dog there. She may have wrapped the dog's body in silk, not to mention the bouquets of violets that adorn the tombstone.

Of course this girl does not know that there are thousands of people living in cemeteries, where they have been forced to live by the housing shortage. Of course she does not know that these people do not cover their living bodies with silk, nor do they smell the scent of violets or any other flowers at all.

Transportation for Important People!

From the highest point atop the Cairo Tower we look at the thousands of houses that were built in an irregular fashion on land in Cairo, a city of 12 million

people. Everything from this altitude seems calm, except for a little smoke coming out of the stacks of factories scattered on the outskirts of the city or small workshops inside this vast residential field. Little by little we try to get closer to things. We zoom in with our camera, and we focus the camera to get a sharper picture.

Right at the bottom of the tower we met Chief 'Ali al-Tuni, foreman of a stand for horse-drawn carriages. In the past horse-drawn carriages in Cairo were the principal means of transportation like buses and taxicabs. Now, however, with the encroachment of ultra-modern cars crowding the streets, horse-drawn carriages have become a rarity. People ride horse-drawn carriages as a form of amusement. As a means of transportation, they are attractive to tourists. Some of the owners of these horse-drawn carriages, especially the older ones, have had their heyday, just like 'Amm Jabir, the coppersmith, and 'Amm Ibrahim, the oldest maker of fezzes did. However, horse-drawn carriages did not turn into heritage items, as fezzes and copper utensils did, because they can still be seen as they are driven in various streets of Cairo. The fare for a horse-drawn carriage is several times that of a taxicab which is driven by a gas-powered engine. It is for this reason that natives do not use horse-drawn carriages and leave them for tourists.

We told Chief 'Ali al-Tuni, "Don't you think that driving a horse-drawn carriage is a profession of the past? Shouldn't people who are driving horse-drawn carriages look for other jobs?"

But Chief al-Tuni did not like what we said. He replied impatiently, "Who said that? There are five stands for horse-drawn carriages in Cairo: one in al-Jazirah --at the tower; one at the Cairo Railway Station; a third in al-Qubbah; a fourth in front of the Egyptian museum; and a fifth in front of the Hilton. The horse-drawn carriage provides transportation for important people, people who want to enjoy the road. There are old-timers who still refuse to ride taxicabs or buses because they are crowded. Unfortunately, however, these people are few. That is why we rely primarily on tourists." According to Chief al-Tuni, "Many families still make their living driving a horse-drawn carriage and that still puts bread and butter on the table. This is true not only for the owners of carriages, but it is also true for people who sell feed, for saddlers and farriers (people who shoe horses) as well as workers in workshops where the carriages are built. There are more than 500 families who earn their living from the blessings of horse-drawn carriages. And you are saying that it is a profession of the past?"

There was another driver who has been driving a horse-drawn carriage for 62 years. He had started when he was 10 years old. When he saw that the discussion was becoming heated, he intervened to calm down the discussion. His name is 'Ali Muhammad Salih, but he is known at the station as 'Ali al-'Ajuz [Old Man 'Ali].

Old Man 'Ali said, "Don't you think that we are better than cars and buses? At least we do not pollute the air with smoke, nor do we make the city noisy with our horns. We also travel faster than cars do in the center of the city. As soon as the light turns green, we move. We do not have to look for a stick shift, an electrical contact or anything else." This is the very special logic that Old Man 'Ali believes in. However, no one can talk him out of this rationale. Can anyone be persuaded that his existence is useless?

Nine Years Old

There is a small car repair shop in the area located between al-'Ajuzah and al-Muhandisin. These are two of Cairo's better neighborhoods. It is there that [we found] Usta Sursar [Master Cockroach] lying under a customer's car that was parked in front of the repair shop. Usta Sursar--and this is his nickname, of course--is a 9-year old child who dropped out of school after the death of his father to help his mother take care of the family, which is made up of a large number of brothers and sisters. His small body was jumping and leaping there looking at something between the parts of the engine. He was lying under the car with his clothes whose color had faded under all the oil and grease. Usta Sursar --this is what people actually call him--is addressed by that title not because of his age, but because of the responsibilities he shoulders.

After hours of work the car repair was completed, and Usta Sursar stood up beside the owner of the luxurious car who had come with his son to pick up the car. The son whose father had picked him up from school was almost the same age as Usta Sursar, but he is much more fortunate than he is. Usta Sursar looks at the car owner and smiles in a way that the car owner understands. So the car owner put a few coins in the master mechanic's pocket, but Usta Sursar was not paying attention because he was looking at the clothes of the son of the man who owned the luxurious car. He then spontaneously looked at his own clothes; then there was a moment of silence interrupted by the shop owner who yelled, "Hey, Sursar, give me wrench number 14."

The Only Stronghold

The camera was still turning. Many objects crowded each other in front of the camera. Their luster was dazzling. It's as though they were vying with each other to appear in the picture. It's as though they wanted to say, "Here we are! You cannot talk about Cairo or about any Egyptian city without talking about us." One of the phenomena that was most persistent about appearing in this review was that of the coffee shops. It is a private world for men, which is still intact amidst women who are fiercely jostling everyone and insisting that they go everywhere. Women here in Egypt are working in every field. They've gone everywhere. They are in hospitals as physicians, nurses and patients; they are in the courts as attorneys; and they are in factories as employees, engineers and workers; and they drive taxicabs.

The only places that women have stayed away from are the coffee shops; these have become the only haven for men. Coffee shops are the only places that women have not been able to conquer.

In Egypt there are many reasons why one would sit in a coffee shop. These reasons can be anything from a desire to flee from harassment by one's wife, a desire to talk politics, play backgammon and cards, sip tea and coffee or other reasons. There are different kinds of coffee shops, but all of them have several features in common that are constant. The first of these is "the setup" or the place where beverages are prepared; the coal for the stove where coffee is prepared on a low fire; a stove for preparing tea, a sweet drink made of salep, and ginger; a cooler for soft drinks; a place for water pipes; a number of backgammon sets; a radio; a recorder; and a number of chairs and tables.

These specialized coffee shops where people go for a principal objective are known in Cairo. There is, for example, a coffee shop for supporting actors on 'Imad al-Din Street which is frequented by people who work in the movies. They go there and wait for an assistant producer or a casting director to come and choose some of them to work in a movie. There is a coffee shop for bakers in al-Jizah Square and a coffee shop for musicians in the well-known Muhammad 'Ali Street where old-time musicians go. One of the most famous coffee shops in Cairo is al-Fishawi Coffee Shop in al-Husayn. It is more than 70 years old, and it is now considered one of Cairo's tourist attractions. There is the Matatiya Coffee Shop in al-'Atabah Square; al-Maliyah Coffee Shop, which is frequented by retired people; and the Riche Coffee Shop, which is considered the coffee shop for intellectuals and those sophists who equivocate and lead a life of idleness that is filled with nothing but words and theories they mouth in the discussions that take place in the coffee shop, which used to be frequented by numerous Egyptian literary figures and thinkers. Najib Mahfuz used to hold his well-known cultural discussion in that coffee shop every Friday until the owner of the coffee shop decided that he would close the coffee shop for his day of rest every Friday.

The time is any day and any hour. The place is the Nile Corniche. The scene is a public one of a large building beside which is a small building. There is a garden in front of the building, and that garden, which has several statues, is surrounded by flagpoles. Before 1976 these two buildings were known as the Office of the Central Committee of the Arab Socialist Union. After 1976 the large building became an office for three parties that turned from platforms to parties after the organization of parties became permissible. These are the Misr Party (center), the Liberal Party (right) and the Grouping Party (left). After other parties began appearing, the small building became an office for the ruling National Party, and the large building was turned into a multi-purpose building, part of which is used by a bank, and another part is used by a firm and so on.

Offices for political parties--and there are six parties now--were scattered in different parts of Cairo. There are now six political parties: the National Party has its offices on the Nile Corniche in the place where the Central Committee of the Socialist Union used to have its offices; the Labor Party, which is the party that comes after the National Party regarding the number of seats it has in the People's Assembly, has its offices in al-Qubbah Gardens; and the Liberal Party and its newspaper are located in two floors of a large residential apartment building on al-Jumhuriyah Street. The two floors used to house the offices of a cotton firm whose board of directors was chaired by Mustafa Kamil Murad, the leader of the party. And there is the Grouping Party which is located on one floor in a building in downtown Cairo on Karim al-Dawlah Street. That building has two floors: the party occupies the top floor, and the first floor is occupied by a public sector store.

So far, al-Ummah Party is located in the home of the man who founded the party. He was the one who announced the organization of the party legally, but ever since the party was founded, he has been looking for someone to head it. Although several months have passed since then, Mr Ahmad al-Sabahi, the founder of the party, has not found the party leader he has been looking for.

There is the new Wafd Party which is located in the home of its leader and president Fu'ad Pasha Siraj-al-Din, one of the principal figures of the old Wafd

before the revolution. Fu'ad Pasha is the one who led the campaign to bring back the Wafd. Despite his years he was imprisoned with those who were taken into custody in the 1980 September campaign.

A Random Tour

It was not possible for us to take our camera to the offices of the six parties. Therefore, we selected two parties at random, and we toured the offices of the Wafd and the Grouping parties.

When one walks into the palace of Fu'ad Pasha Siraj al-Din, one feels as though a fez were suddenly placed on one's head--it is just a feeling. One gets another feeling of how small a human being is compared with the large size of objects in the palace. Everything there is huge: the stones of the house, the palm trees, the pillars in the house, the high ceilings, the magnificent paintings, the flower vases and the chandeliers hanging from the ceiling.

The first person one meets is a servant who does several jobs simultaneously: he is a domestic, a secretary and a security man who prevents any photographer from taking pictures of anything in the house. "These are the Pasha's orders," [he says].

Everything is old; no matter how much one cleans, one cannot wipe away the dust of the years which has become part of the fabric of the cloth covering the chairs in the parlor. One climbs three steps after one walks into the front door of the palace. After that one finds a large hall leading into more than one room. It is here that members of the party sit just as they used to sit in the past waiting for al-Nahhas Pasha who would be meeting with Fu'ad Pasha in his office where pictures of al-Nahhas Pasha still hang on the walls. The bookshelves of Fu'ad Pasha's office are lined with books on law in French, and there is another room designated for meetings of the Wafd board.

The pasha and his family live on the upper floor. He sleeps in the room where his father used to sleep. His father had bought the mansion in the twenties. In the pasha's bedroom hangs a picture of the pasha with the late president al-Sadat who had him arrested in September 1980. There are other rooms on that floor: two of them are for his daughter and his grandchild.

At the entrance to the offices of the Grouping Party one finds a virtual demonstration of posters; some of these are in Arabic, and others are in English or French. "Freedom, Socialism, Unity." There were other signs in Russian and Italian. Facing the door was a bust of President Jamal 'Abd-al-Nasir that is about three meters high. To the left there was a large room where another group of pictures and posters were hanging. On top of the door to the hall was a clock running one hour and a half late. To the right was the office of Khalid Muhyi-al-Din, the secretary general of the party or "the comrade," as some national newspapers call him. He was seated behind his small desk and on the wall behind him was a picture of President Jamal 'Abd-al-Nasir. To his right there were pictures of al-Ka'bah, the Prophet's Mosque and other pictures of Red Square in Moscow.

Mr Khalid Muhyi-al-Din told us, "We have four offices in Cairo. They are located

in popular and labor areas: in al-Zaytun, al-Sayidah Zaynab, Hulwan and al-Tibin. We have other offices in 21 of the country's 25 governorates."

Muhyi-al-Din spoke at length about his party, its leadership staff and its support base. He spoke about the majority party, the National Party. [He asked], "Why is the National Party refusing to establish a youth organization for all the young people of all parties?"

Muhyi-al-Din spoke about the future. "1984 will be a decisive year. The political map of Egypt will be changed during that year because 1984 is an election year. The National Party will not be a majority party, and the Wafd will lose to the Grouping Party. The Liberal Party will not succeed, and I will not comment on al-Ummah Party."

These were Mr Khalid Muhyi-al-Din's private opinions. We can only respect them regardless of whether or not we agree with them.

This is how Egypt is: Egypt, [the country] of the pyramids and the subway; Egypt, [the country] of the 9-year old man and of the al-Jazirah Club aristocracy. This is Lucy's country. It is also the country of al-Fishawi Coffee Shop and the country of the Cairo Tower. This is Egypt where six parties vie with each other under the dome of parliament.

8592
CSO: 4504/191

NEW ALLIANCES IN TERRITORIES NOTED

TA091619 Tel Aviv 'AL HAMISHMAR in Hebrew 9 Mar 84 p 6

[Commentary by Pinhas 'Inbari: "Pulling in Different Directions"]

[Text] The complicated political arrangement in Judaea and Samaria has not become any clearer following 'Arafat's visit to Amman. On the contrary: Conflicting developments and strange alliances continue to characterize political life in the territories, as has been the case all along. Still, one conspicuous process seems to be emerging, and certainly deserves attention: Politics in the West Bank and politics in the Gaza Strip appear to be taking separate paths.

At a meeting between 'Arafat and notables from the territories, representatives from the Gaza Strip were conspicuous by their absence. It is true that the deposed mayor of Gaza, Rashad al-Shawwa, asked for permission to go to Amman, but this was refused by Israel. However, other representatives from the Gaza Strip did not go to Amman either; this almost certainly is a result of hints dropped by Jordan to the effect that their visit would not fit in with the new political line now taking shape in the Middle East.

Why not? Because, apparently, an understanding in principle had already been reached between Jordan, Egypt, and the PLO on continuing the political process. In accordance with this understanding Jordan will demand the West Bank and Egypt the Gaza Strip. Additionally, this reasoning follows that no Arab formula based on the Reagan initiative can be worked out, let alone on the Camp David process. Therefore a return must be made to the roots of the political process in the Middle East, namely Security Council Resolution 242. According to this resolution Jordan demands the West Bank, and Egypt the Gaza Strip and a separation must be made between these two parts of Palestine prior to a new stage in the political process.

This process began to make itself felt about 4 months after Rashad al-Shawwa made his peace with Egypt following a long period of opposition to Egyptian influence in the Gaza Strip. Since he was linked first and foremost with the PLO and Jordan, al-Shawwa would not permit visits to the Strip by former Egyptian Ambassador Murtada, and also used other means to safeguard Jordanian and PLO interests at Egypt's expense. In the wake of the reconciliation, al-Shawwa's visit to Cairo was made possible, as were meetings with President Mubarak and other senior Egyptian Government officials.

However, when Rashad al-Shawwa realized that the new ties formed by him with Cairo would come at the expense of his relations with Amman, he began to worry. This anxiety explains his eagerness to go to Jordan and his intense frustration when Israel denied him the visit. Is Israel knowingly cooperating with Jordan on this? That is hard to believe. In any event, Israeli policy does not fit in with the moves for establishing a new political process.

In formulating the new political program, no mention will be made of Resolution 242, because of the difficulties the PLO is bound to encounter in this respect. The process will be based on the resolution, but without mentioning it by name. The first hint of what is to come again was heard coming from the West Bank: The petition which pro-Jordanian supporters prepared to submit to 'Arafat for the first time made no mention of the need to accept Resolution 242.

There are two types of pro-Jordanian supporters in the West Bank: one group reflects Jordan's traditional hatred of the PLO for presuming to represent the Palestinians, which damaging the PLO's main political asset, namely the formula stating that it is the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinians; the second group is linked to the Jordanian-PLO Joint Committee. Unlike the first group, the second reflects the partnership between Husayn and 'Arafat.

After Jordan ended its pressure on 'Arafat--more or less successfully--and the time drew near for the visit, it was the second group's turn. They were led by representatives of public organizations closely affiliated with the joint committee, such as the various mayors, led by Ilyas Frayj of Bethlehem, and Hikmat al-Masri of Nabulus. Al-Masri is also the link between the two groups and, in addition to his duties as chairman of the Board of Directors of al-Najah College, he is also a member of the Jordanian Senate. Herein lies the explanation why this group should have been included, reflecting as it does the Jordan-PLO partnership, in the Jordanian category. Its members are for the most part pro-Jordan first, and pro-PLO second. Another example of Jordan's preference for this group can be found in the person of Mahmud abu-Zalaf, editor of East Jerusalem's AL-QUDS, a publication known for its faithful expression of Jordanian stands.

The third group formed in the West Bank is made up of purely pro-PLO people. It is Yasir 'Arafat whom they support, as well as a Jordanian-Palestinian dialogue--one based on PLO norms. This group finds its clearest expression in the daily paper AL-FAJR. The root of the new complication in the West Bank political arrangement lies in the fact that when 'Arafat was in Amman, he met not with his most ardent supporters from the West Bank, but with the pro-Jordan group. Thus, the paper that was the most enthusiastic supporter of the 'Arafat-Jusayn talks was not AL-FAJR, but AL-QUDS.

Before the visit, and even during it, AL-FAJR printed attacks on Jordan; this embarrassed 'Arafat. The difference between the delegation that met with 'Arafat and between the PLO supporters in the West Bank who did not attend the meeting is that the former urged 'Arafat not to fear a joint path with Husayn, whereas the AL-FAJR circles, while supporting the dialogue in principle, warned 'Arafat to be careful of Husayn.

Thus, AL-FAJR wrote on 27 February 1984--the day 'Arafat arrived in Amman--that 'Arafat's visit to Amman proves to what extent the Palestinian leadership adheres to political activity as an inalienable part of the struggle.... The dialogue must be conducted between two equal sides, based on the special historic ties linking the two peoples. At the same time the following must be emphasized: inhabitants of the occupied land look fearfully upon the negotiations now underway in Amman.... Even though the majority support a dialogue... on the basis of equality.... The fear thus does not stem from a vacuum, but from measures such as the parliamentary steps taken by Jordan...which raise questions regarding Jordan's real motives where the Palestinian question is concerned.... To this day the Jordanian side has not clarified the nature of future confederal ties with the PLO, and it must elaborate on them now..."

Yet another thread in the political fabric of the territories is the one linked to the organizations of George Habash, Na'if al-Hawatimah, the communists, and--to a certain extent--the supporters of Abu Musa [Sa'id Musa Muragha]. Whereas the first group is considered right-wing and part of the wider Jordan-PLO-Egypt-Saudi Arabia constellation, part of the second group relies on Syria and another part has dissociated itself from both Syria and the Jordan-Palestinian dialogue. While AL-FAJR warns 'Arafat against making concessions to Husayn, the leftwing branch contends that 'Arafat has already yielded to Husayn, and the dialogue as it is waged by 'Arafat must be ruled out.

Definitively speaking it can be said that those who lean towards the Syrian positions are supporters of Habash and Abu Musa. In their publications, mainly leaflets and slogans written on walls, they do not hesitate to call 'Arafat a traitor and demand his removal from the PLO leadership. Supporters of AL-HAWATIMAH and the communists differ in that they may be very critical of 'Arafat, but they draw no conclusions.

CSO: 4400/191

DISCUSSION ON AREA VILLAGE LEAGUES FEDERATION DECISION

TA110710 Jerusalem Domestic Service in Hebrew 0505 GMT 11 Mar 84

[Report by Arye Gus--live in studio]

[Text] The decision to freeze the Federation of Area Village Leagues activity is another move to stifle its activity as a political organization in the territories. About 2 weeks ago village league leaders held a conference in 'Arad, at which Binyamin Ben-'Eli'ezer, the coordinator of activities in the territories, demanded that they stop involving themselves in politics. The Ramallah Area Village Leagues leader then proposed that the federation be dissolved, because in his opinion the federation reflected the political nature of the area village leagues. The decision was postponed to a later date, and yesterday it was decided to merely freeze its activities as a sign of protest. Jamil al-'Amlah, the head of the Hebron Area Village Leagues, opposed the freeze, but at yesterday's meeting he voted for it.

[Begin Al-'Amlah recording] The debate was [word indistinct] for a number of reasons. We established the federation as a result of, and for politics. Right now we do not want to deal with politics extensively, because first of all we must work in the area and develop our villages. [end recording]

So from now on the area village leagues will operate in a local, not regional framework and the leagues' newspaper AL-MIR'A, will no longer appear. These decisions were preceded by power struggles and differences of opinion over the past few months among the leaders of the various area village leagues. The military government has also cooled its enthusiasm for the leagues, and according to Ben-Eli'ezer and Shlomo Ilia [former head of the Civilian Administration] the leagues should have resumed their previous roles.

The former head of the Federation of Area Village Leagues, Mustafa Dudin, reacted to the above angrily, saying: I previously served as al-Nasir's [former president of Egypt] counselor and as a minister in the Jordanian Government. Are they now trying to make me an official in the Military Government dealing with internal affairs?

CSO: 4400/191

ANCIENT GRAVE SITE MAY BE PROBLEM FOR JERUSALEM HAREDIM

Jerusalem THE JERUSALEM POST in English 17 Feb 84 pp 1, 2

[Article by Abraham Rabinovich]

[Text] Virtually all neighbourhoods in Jerusalem, particularly Haredi (ultra-Orthodox) neighbourhoods, are built atop ancient graveyards, according to an archeological report released this week.

The report is part of the running battle between the archeological community and haredi elements in Jerusalem who have been attempting to halt excavation of ancient graves in the city.

Released by the municipality, the report is based largely on a doctoral dissertation by Amos Kloner of the antiquities department on the necropolis that surrounded the walled city of Jerusalem in the Second Temple period. Despite its dry tone, the report seems intended to embarrass the haredim into being more conciliatory on archeological excavations.

For some 250 years before the destruction of the temple in 70 CE, burials of Jerusalem's dead were carried out in hand-hewn caves in a three-kilometre-wide belt surrounding the Old City. Each family had its own cave tomb and special tombs were prepared at public expense for pilgrims who died in the city or for executed criminals.

Of the 650 burial caves uncovered so far, according to Kloner, the thickest concentration--some 40 per cent--was north of the city in the areas now occupied in good measure by haredi neighbourhoods from Mea She'arim to the "bible belt" between Tel Sanz and Romema.

Although no caves were reported when Mea She'arim was constructed a century ago, Kloner presumes this was because foundations were not dug deep enough or because the caves were simply not recognized for what they were.

"We've found only 10-15 per cent of graves from that period," Kloner said in an interview yesterday. "Many were destroyed over the centuries during quarrying, but I'm 100 per cent certain that many intact graves still exist under houses and roads."

Jerusalem District Archeologist Dan Bahat, who compiled the report for the Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies, said this week that the fact

that modern Jerusalem is built in a graveyard "means that we have no alternative but to compromise with reality and evacuate the bones with due ceremony" after archeologists have excavated the graves. In antiquity, he said, graves were shifted outside the city's perimeter when the city was expanded.

However, the leader of the haredi fight against grave excavations, Rabbi David Shmidl of the Atra Kadisha organization, told THE JERUSALEM POST yesterday that Kloner's findings were not a surprise to him and required no change in the haredi position.

"The city was surrounded by burial caves in antiquity but interspersed among fields and villages, not in a continuous strip," he said.

Shmidl denied that haredi Jews would have to move out of neighbourhoods suspected of being built on graveyards in view of the religious ban of living in a graveyard. Granting the likelihood that graves lay beneath Jerusalem's neighbourhoods, he said, there was definitely no halachic obligation to search for an unknown grave.

Where graves are known, he said, houses and roads can be built above them as long as "double ceiling" is built above the graves to keep their impurity from contaminating the surrounding area. Thus, he said, halacha (religious law) does not impede the building up of Jerusalem.

It will, however, continue to impede excavations of graves, he said. Haredim do not accept the violation of ancient resting places and the transfer of bones from their original graves for the convenience of modern scientists.

CSO: 4400/182

BRIEFS

TRADE DEFICIT INCREASE--Israel's trade deficit totalled \$226 million last month, an increase of 14 percent over the \$198 million in February 1983. Figures released yesterday by the Central Bureau of Statistics showed that the widening of the trade gap was due to a 7 percent increase in imports which offset a slight rise in exports. [Excerpt] [TA120754 Jerusalem THE JERUSALEM POST in English 12 Mar 84 p 2 TA]

IMPORTS, EXPORTS DATA--Imports during the first 2 months of 1984 were 11 percent lower than the monthly average in last quarter of 1983, according to figures released on Friday by the Central Bureau of Statistics. Goods totalling \$643 million were imported in February, compared to \$602 million worth of goods imported in February 1983. Fuel imports dropped by 9 percent in the first 2 months of the year, compared to January-February 1983, due to significant decline in January. Increased fuel imports in February were instrumental in causing a 7-percent increase in total merchandise imports over February 1983. [Excerpt] [Jerusalem THE JERUSALEM POST in English 11 Mar 84 p 2 TA]

IMMIGRATION UP--Last month 1,373 new immigrants arrived in Israel, an increase of 13 percent over the preceding month. Compared with February 1983 the increase is even greater, amounting to 30 percent. [Text] [Jerusalem Domestic Service in Hebrew 1500 GMT 11 Mar 84 TA]

BEGIN POST FACTO DECLARATION SIGNATORY--A proposal that former premier Begin be made a post facto a signatory to the Declaration of Independence has been made to Premier Shamir, who has said that he will give the matter his attention. The proposal was made a fortnight ago by Deputy Housing Minister Moshe Katzav in a letter to Shamir. Katzav, who received Shamir's reply at the end of last week, argues that the nation owes Begin a debt of honour for his "selfless and dangerous fight against the British which led to their withdrawal from the country." Begin, Katzav wrote, was denied the historic privilege of signing the declaration on May 15, 1948 because he was underground and at ideological odds with the establishment that headed the nation at the time of the state's creation. This "injustice" should now be rectified, Katzav wrote. Katzav proposes that both the coalition and the opposition join in taking appropriate measures in the Knesset to ensure that Begin's signature be appended to the document. [Text] [Jerusalem THE JERUSALEM POST in English 19 Feb 84 p 2]

TRADE WITH JAPAN--Tel Aviv.--Japan's new ambassador to Israel, Shozo Kadota, would like to see an increase in the cultural, economic and tourist exchange between his country and Israel. He said this last week at a luncheon given for him by the Israel-Japan Friendship Society and Chamber of Commerce. This "highly sophisticated and energetic society" should appeal to Japanese tourists, the ambassador said. Israel's sales to Japan, about \$200m. a year, form one-sixth of a per cent of Japan's total imports, there is plenty of room for an increase, he said. The meeting was chaired by Joshua Nishri, chairman of the society, and was addressed by Aharon Meir, managing director of the United Mizrahi Bank, which sponsored the event. [Text] [Jerusalem THE JERUSALEM POST in English 19 Feb 84 p 3]

CSO: 4400/182

NEW PRESS LAW IMPOSES ADDITIONAL RESTRAINTS

Kuwait AL-TALI'AH in Arabic No 820, 7 Dec 83 pp 14-15

[Article by Hasan 'Ali: "Government Bill for Press Is Another Visage of Article 35 bis"]

[Text] Discussing the current government attempts to pass the bill for the press law previously submitted to the People's Assembly in 1981 calls for reexamination of this bill and our position towards it to expose what it conceals in terms of additional heavy restraints that will limit freedom of press and publication.

When the government revoked the royal decree concerning the addition of Article 35 bis of the press and publication law which allowed administrative suspension of a paper and revocation of the publishing license without a court ruling and submitted its alternative bill for the press and publication law, it partially retreated because it perceived the extensiveness of popular and parliamentary opposition to this article restricting freedoms, which constituted an important element in the course it had designed since 1976 of tightening current restrictions on public freedoms.

Revocation of Article 35 bis has not meant granting freedom of press and publications but means that one oppressive restriction shackling such freedoms for over 5 years, administrative suspension of a paper, was finally broken, and this in itself was a popular gain that had its own importance. This proves that there is an actual potential to wrest gains, democratic rights and popular demands whenever serious popular movement mobilizes for such a cause.

The government bill for a press and publication law is not a democratic one as it includes several restrictions that limit freedom of the press under the pretext of such loose expressions as "public interest" and "disturbing the order." They also exist within the framework of administrative measures and procedures to obtain permits and licenses to work in the press, and we shall attempt to shed some light on all of this:

- Article 13 of the government bill permits the minister of information to ban any publication "if its circulation disturbs the order or would impair Kuwait's relations with Arab, Islamic or friendly nations, or if it would encroach upon the sanctity of religions, public interest or morality." The

same is true of Article 14 which makes it lawful to ban any works published abroad from admission and circulation in Kuwait under the pretext of maintaining order and protecting the sanctity of religions and morality. Our question then is: To what extent can we stretch interpretations of such expressions as "disturbing the order" or "Kuwait's relation with other countries" or "public interest"?

Is it not possible to consider opposition to government policy or measures in any area as a matter contrary to public interest and is it not also possible to interpret opposition to some Arab parties' acceptance of the Reagan initiative as being harmful to Kuwait's relation with other nations? This is beside other flexible interpretations!

- Article 26 of the bill submitted by the government requires the paper's editor in chief or editor to have published articles or drawings signed by the authentic name of the writer or artist. This clause is undoubtedly directed against articles, complaints and letters published under the column entitled "letters from the readers" who are apprehensive of the consequences of publishing under their authentic names, due to the completely undemocratic circumstances we are currently experiencing. Here comes a government bill to prohibit them from exactly that.

- Article 36 list topics that should not be published, subject to punishment by imprisonment for a period not exceeding 6 months or a fine of 2,000 dinars. It forbids the publication of anything with implications "discrediting the head of an Arab or Islamic state or any other nation that has diplomatic relations with Kuwait." Zia of Pakistan, whose people have rebelled against him, is head of an Islamic state and President Reagan is head of a nation which exchanges diplomatic representation with Kuwait. These and others should not be subject to attack as this will be considered as a dishonor to them and this calls for punishment of the offender!

- Clause four of the same Article 36 forbids the publication of "news of secret official contacts" even if they are similar to those mentioned by Admiral John Adams, commander of the American Forces in the Middle East, concerning the agreement between the Gulf States and the United States with regard to American intervention in the Gulf in the event of the closing of the Straits of Hormuz, which was recently confirmed by the American Energy Secretary!

- Article 38 also penalized the "publication of criticism that discredits the honor or work of a government official, a deputy, or individual assigned to perform a public service." The danger here is that this may include the scandals of exploiting influence and embezzling public funds--which are not infrequent these days--since it is not permissible to the offenders. Consequently the papers will become nothing more than dull informational publications, exalting and applauding the positive achievements of the government without criticizing corruption, exploitation of influence or embezzlement of public funds!

There are numerous examples that were exposed by the press and whose publication now would be prohibited by the new government bill, information or

criticisms that will be considered as an offense, subject to punishment when the bill is passed!

- If the government is unable to use the weapon of administrative suspension of a paper as was the case under the provisions of Article 35 bis that has been revoked, Article 44 of the government bill gives the head of the criminal court, upon the request of the public prosecutor, the aggrieved party or the ministry of information (and here is the crux of the issue), the right of temporary suspension of the paper during the investigation and trial period, i.e., before passing the verdict! Such a suspension can be described as a semi-administrative suspension.

Despite the fact that the laws are regional, meaning that they are applicable to offenses committed only within the state and not to those committed abroad, and although there is legal classification that distinguishes between the offenders of any crime as original perpetrators, instigators or accomplices to the crime, article 48 of the government bill for the press law discounts all these legal principles and extends the jurisdiction of the law to include publications outside Kuwait, and penalizes circulators, if such publications are published abroad and the publisher or author is unknown, as the original perpetrator and not as an accomplice. Article 48 stipulates that "cases where papers or publications in question are published abroad and in all cases where it is not possible to identify the author or publisher, the law penalizes the importers, printers and circulators as the original perpetrators."

- Article 35 of the government bill is an identical recording of the issue of "national interest" and penalizes the editor in chief of a paper whose "policy is contradictory to national interest," for which there is no clear definition to meaning so that it is possible to include arbitrarily any opposition to the government's policy.

- Finally, Article 64 of the government bill stipulates that "all individuals required by this law to obtain licenses or permits to practice have to submit a request within a period of 2 months from the effective date of this law to obtain the permit or license within 3 months from the date of submitting the request, which otherwise is to be considered as rejection of this request. This means that the ministry of information has a new, broader power to deny licenses to editors, writers and current newspaper owners. This is a serious weapon that the ministry of information can rightfully use against individuals, writings or trends in papers that displease it. In fact, this includes restrictions that are equivalent to the limitations of the revoked Article 35 bis!

The press and publication bill submitted by the government is not the required alternative; it includes more oppressive limitations that restrict freedom of the press and publication and which are contradictory to Article 37 of the Constitution that guarantees freedom of the press, printing and publication.

It is true that the report of the parliamentary committee has rejected several articles of the proposed government bill for the press and submitted alternative clauses. However, our collective experience of "government

capabilities" at the council will make us wary of relying merely on parliamentary opposition, which if not coupled with broad popular opposition will be unable to halt government designs. Our experience with the revision of the Constitution provides a good example to the truth of our statement.

The battle which began for freedom of press and publication has not ended with the revocation of Article 35 bis and should be carried on by rejecting additional constraints restricting the freedom of the press in order to establish the freedom of the press as a legitimate, democratic and constitutional right.

12561

CSO: 4404/272

BRIEFS

CULTURAL AGREEMENT WITH MOROCCO--Rabat, 10 Mar (WAKH)--Oman and Morocco have signed a cultural cooperation agreement under which Morocco is to help in renovating historical buildings in Oman and bilateral cooperation in the field of publications is to be stepped up. Omani undersecretary of the Ministry of National Heritage and Culture Malallah Habib signed for his country and Secretary of State for Higher Education and Scientific Research Said Ben el-Bachir signed for Morocco. Mr Malallah arrived in Rabat last Sunday on an official visit to Morocco. [Text] [Manama WAKH in English 1535 GMT 10 Mar 84 GF]

DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH BRUNEI--A joint statement was issued in Muscat and Bandar Seri Begawan today establishing diplomatic relations between the Sultanates of Oman and Brunei on the ambassadorial level. [Summary] [Muscat Domestic Service in Arabic 1300 GMT 14 Mar 84 GF]

CSO: 4400/192

AGENCY REPORTS ENERGY MINISTER'S TALKS IN PRC

Dhaka THE BANGLADESH OBSERVER in English 27 Jan 84 pp 1, 12

[Text] Beijing, Jan 26--China attaches great importance to the positive contributions made by Bangladesh for promoting international peace and security, reports BSS.

This was stated by the Acting Premier of China, Mr Wan Li while the DCMLA and Minister for Energy and Mineral Resources Air Vice-Marshal-Sultan Mahmud met him in Beijing yesterday.

Mr Wan Li said that his country and Bangladesh shared identical views on many international and regional issues.

In this connection, the Acting Premier, particularly referred to Dhaka's stand on Afghanistan and Kampuchea problems and expressed China's deep appreciation in this regard.

Acting Premier also evinced keen interest in the development efforts in Bangladesh and expressed the hope that Bangladesh would achieve social and economic progress under the able and dynamic leadership of President Ershad.

He also conveyed to DCMLA the friendly greetings of the Government and the people of China to the Government and the people of Bangladesh.

Air Vice-Marshal Sultan Wahmud reciprocated the sentiments expressed by the Chinese Acting Premier and conveyed appreciation of the Government and the people for the excellent cooperation extended by China to Bangladesh in various fields.

He hoped that this cooperation would be further strengthened in the days to come.

Later, in the evening, Air Vice-Marshal Sultan Mahmud attended a welcoming banquet hosted in his honour by Mr Zhang Tingfa, Commander of PLA air force.

In his welcoming address Commander Zhang said that China and Bangladesh were close and friendly neighbours and existed a long standing traditional friendship between the two people.

Mr Zhang highly praised the contributions made by Bangladesh in improving and strengthening the relations with her South Asian neighbours and promoting regional cooperation.

We would like to extend to you our sincere congratulations on the achievements made by your country in the struggle for safeguarding and consolidating national independence and sovereignty and for improving national economy towards building a prosperous country, he added.

He also appreciated the joint efforts made by the two friendly countries in enhancing their relations and cooperations as well as playing significant role in the international affairs as followers of independent foreign policy opposing aggression and expansionism.

In his reply, Air Vice-Marshal Sultan Mahmud said that both Bangladesh and China believed in the mutual cooperation between the two countries. He said that our two countries shared similar views on major global problems and issues, and have been closely cooperating in international forums for the realisation of common interest.

The DCMLA said that this was our firm belief that there can be no peace without progress and no progress without peace.

We are looking forward to sharing our experiences with you in all possible areas of cooperation, the DCMLA added.

Air Vice-Marshal Sultan Mahmud said that as a close friend and neighbour, Bangladesh has been watching with deep interest and admiration the laudable efforts made and commendable progress achieved by China in all fields under the inspiring leadership of the country.

The banquet was attended by the Ambassador of Bangladesh, Mr C.M. Murshed and other senior officials of both countries.

CSO: 4600/1555

BANGLADESH

STATISTICS SHOW DROP IN AID DISBURSEMENT

Dhaka THE BANGLADESH OBSERVER in English 30 Jan 84 pp 1, 12

[Text] Aid flow recorded a marked decline during the current financial year, 1983-84. Project aid disbursements during the first five months of the fiscal 1984 till November 83 totalled about 260 million US dollars which was 9 percent short of the level during the corresponding period in fiscal 1983. Commodity aid disbursements at about 140 million US dollars during July-November, 82 were similarly short of the level of 170 million US dollars during the corresponding period last year.

The disbursement figures for December 83 have not yet been updated. Available indications suggest that there has not been any change in disbursement picture during that month.

Disbursements apart fresh commitments of external assistance during the first five months of the current fiscal year were much short of the level during the corresponding period last year. The aid crunch has been felt more particularly in commodity assistance field. As against 240 million US dollars during July-November, 83, new commodity and commitments were worth about 140 million US dollars during the first five months of the current fiscal year. Project aid new commitments totaled 325 million US dollars during the period under review as against 460 million US dollars in the corresponding period last year.

Fresh food aid commitments were made to the tune of about 140 million US dollars during July-November 83 as against 180 million US dollar during the corresponding period in 1982-83. The fall in the level of new food aid commitments does not concern much the official circles. The Planning Commission sources maintain that the disbursement target of 230 million US dollar in the form of food assistance for 1983-84 will be achieved and the import arrivals of food grains have been satisfactory so far this year.

The slow pace of project and commodity aid disbursements during the first five months of the current fiscal year has meanwhile made the prospects of attaining the overall projected aid-flows at 1400 million US dollars uncertain for 1983-84. The projection at the beginning of the current fiscal year was made on the basis of anticipated project aid disbursements at 700 million US dollars commodity aid disbursements at 460 million US dollars and food aid disbursements at 230 million US dollars.

The current fiscal year, to note here, began with an aid pipeline of 3650 million US dollars in the form of project aid, 460 million US dollars in the form of project aid, 460 million US dollars in the form of commodity aid and 40 million in the form of food aid.

While the project aid pipeline remains as of now at comfortable levels, the commodity aid situation particularly is worrying the officials in view of its slow disbursements along with decline in new commitments. This is more so in view of the fact that commodity aid not only provides the major funds for import trade operations but also remains the principal source of Government revenue earnings. To a large extent again the utilisation of project assistance is dependent on generation of matching Taka sources through mainly the utilisation of commodity aid.

The shortfall in Government revenue earnings during the first six months of the current fiscal year have already necessitated the initiation of works for a downward revision of the size of the current year's Annual Development Programme (ADP). Available indications suggest that the ADP size will be cut by at least 15 percent in its revised form. This has now made the economic outlook for the year, declared earlier officially as the year of implementation improvement, not as promising as projected at beginning of the year.

CSO: 4600/1559

CORRESPONDENT REPORTS ON BANKING OPERATIONS

Private Deposits Up

Dhaka THE BANGLADESH OBSERVER in English 28 Jan 84 pp 1, 16

[Text] The deposit mobilisation drive of the private sector banks made a significant headway over the last six months. As against Tk 66.80 crore on June 30, 83 total deposits with private sector banks stood at the level of Taka 275.78 crore on December 31, '83. This means that deposits have gone up by TK 208.98 crore.

The growth in deposits with private sector banks had taken place during the first six months of the current fiscal year 1983-84 notwithstanding the continuing government restrictions on opening operations with them by public sector corporations, autonomous and semi-autonomous bodies and other similar agencies. Only five percent of total bank deposits of the government bodies and public sector corporations are allowed to be kept with the private sectors.

Different chambers trade associations and private bank management authorities have a sore feeling about the continuing restrictions on the public sector bodies and government and semigovernment agencies about their transactions with the private banks most of which are not yet even a year old. As one top executive of a private sector bank which had succeeded in raising its deposits from Taka 30.43 crore to Taka 108.83 crore during the six-monthly period ending on December 31, '83 felt the Government has allowed the growth of private sector banks in the country in pursuance of its policy favouring the overall growth of the private sector in the economy. In each of the newly-operational private banks the government has a minimum share of five percent in their total paid-up capital and as such the government should feel itself also responsible for the growth of private banks, he observed.

Another seasoned banker who joined a private sector bank only recently points out that since government and the public sector agencies still account for larger part of activities in the organised sector of the bank the restrictions on public sector agencies and semi-autonomous bodies about their transactions with private sector banks are certain to impede the growth of private banking along competitive lines.

Meanwhile, the number of branches of private sector banks in the country now totals 31. The four nationalised commercial banks (NCBs) along with Pubali and Uttara Banks which were recently converted into public limited companies have a total of over 3,500 branches.

The liquidity position of six existing operational banks in the private sector shows that most of them are having more cash and other liquid assets with them than the case with the nationalised commercial banks (inclusive of Pubali and Uttara Banks) and the foreign banks. As against an average of 28.20 percent for NCB's and 28.35 percent for seven foreign banks in operation in the country the average liquidity ratio for private sector banks stood at 33.02 percent of their total deposits on December 31, '83.

The required level of liquid assets holding in the form of (1) cash in tills (2) balances with the Central Bank or its approved securities, as set by Bangladesh Bank for all scheduled banks in the country is 25 percent of their respective total deposits.

The six private sector banks with their total deposits of Taka 275.78 crore and liquid assets of Taka 91.05 crore as on December 31, '83 made total advances of Taka 184.73 crore in the form of bank credits to different clients in the private sector. An analysis of the investment portfolio of different private sector banks reflects that most of their investments have gone for financing the foreign trade sector.

Scheduled Bank Deposits

Dhaka THE BANGLADESH OBSERVER in English 28 Jan 84 pp 1, 16

[Text] The deposits with the scheduled banks (excluding Bangladesh Krishi Bank) totaled Taka 6,067.71 crore on December 31, 1983 as against Taka 4,725.72 crore on June 30, 1983, an increase of Taka 1341.99 crore.

The liquidity ratio, representing the proportion of liquid assets in the form of liquid assets in the form of (1) cash in tills, (2) balances with the Central Bank or its agent and (3) unencumbered approved securities in relation to total deposits, stood at 28.39 percent on December 30, 1983 as against 32 percent on June 31, 1983. This excludes the operations of Bangladesh Krishi Bank as a Scheduled Bank.

The liquidity position of the scheduled banks on December 31, 1983 with a fall in aggregate liquidity ratio from the level recorded on June 30, 1983 reflected the expansion of bank credits to the level of Taka 4344.94 crore from that of Taka 3212.97 crore during the six month period ending on December 31, 1983.

Meanwhile, the share of four nationalised commercial banks and two recently-made public limited companies, Uttara Bank and Pubali Bank, stood roughly at 86 percent of total deposits at the close of business on December 31, 1983. The deposits with six foreign banks in operation in the country totaled Taka 478.06 crore. Bangladesh Shilpa Bank (BSB) had a deposit of Taka 87 crore. The private sector banks accounted for rest of the bank deposits.

Money Supply Up

Dhaka THE BANGLADESH OBSERVER in English 30 Jan 84 pp 1

[Text] Money supply has expanded at the rate of 22 to 23 percent over the last seven months of the current fiscal year having adverse effects on the prices of consumer goods. The rate of inflation has also gone up due to increased money supply and costpush measures.

According to official statistics the rate of inflation has increased by 8 percent. But unofficial sources and the market behaviour put the figure at a much higher level. The Bangladesh Bank has failed to take any concrete step to contain the alarming rate of money supply in the country over the last two years. The money supply recorded a phenomenal rise by 28 percent last year leaving the price-push effects in the economy.

The Bangladesh Bank is, however, contemplating certain selected credit control measures to contain money supply and inflation.

According to a Bangladesh Bank source the money supply has increased due to expansion of credit in private and rural sectors by 19 percent and increase in foreign exchange reserve to the tune of Taka 1250 crores (over 500 million U.S. dollars). Big chunk of this foreign exchange was procured by the Bangladesh Bank from the foreign exchange auction market to boost remittance by the wage earners.

Status of Debts

Dhaka THE BANGLADESH OBSERVER in English 2 Feb 84 pp 1, 12

[Text] The payments of interest on Medium and Long Term (MLT) external loans will total 81 million US dollar in ascal 1984. Besides amortization or repayments of principal will involve another 69 million US dollar. Total debt-servicing liability on external MLT will thus stand at 150 million US dollars in 1983-84 according to Planning Commission sources.

According to Bangladesh Bank statistics, the total outstanding external debt stood at 6,003 million US dollar on June 30, '83. External Resources Division (ERD) estimates show that external aid disbursements to Bangladesh since December 16, '71 till June 30, '83 totalled 10,335 million US dollar of which the component of grant which has not involved any debt-servicing charge was around 5300.6 million dollar, 51.29 percent of total aid disbursements.

While no worthwhile assessment of the impact of such a level of aid-absorption on growth of real productive potentials of the economy is yet to be made, the pattern of aid absorption so far shows that bulk of it coming in the form of commodity and food assistance has gone for meeting current consumption needs. The share of project aid disbursements, totaling 3504,4 million dollar, was only about 34 percent of aggregate volume of external aid disbursements over the last 12-year period till June 30, '83.

The debt-servicing for external MLT loans would now accentuate from 1983-84 as a sizeable amount of principal repayments of such loans from International Development Association (IDA), Asian Development Bank (ADB), Islamic Development Bank (IDB), Saudi Arabia and the USA become payable. The growing debt-servicing liability at a time aid flow remains stagnated will cause the net aid inflow to decline further, a concerned Planning Commission official pointed out.

A tentative estimate about debt-servicing liability for the coming fiscal year (1984-85) presents a further increase of such payments for MLT debt to 200 million US dollar with interest component of it reaching the level of over 100 million US dollar.

Beginning in 1973-74 with a modest amount of 17.5 million dollar, debt-servicing payments will thus swell more than eight fold now in fiscal 1984. In 1982-83, debt-servicing payments finally exceeded the original projection at year-beginning at 120 million dollar by more 30 million dollar because of repayments of wheat loans from the USSR and some Saudi commodity loan, not included in the original projection.

Meanwhile, repayments of short-term commercial loans, incurred mostly in early years of 1980s following the aid squeeze, and also Indian food loans will involve 67 million dollars besides the MLT debt-servicing of 150 million dollars for the year. According to planning Commission sources, there will be no short-term borrowings for repayment for the next fiscal year after repayments of 52 million dollar in 1982-83 and 27 million dollar in 1983-84 as the government has already decided not to go any hard-term commercial borrowings for the short-term.

On IMF account, the country will pay 45 million special Drawing Rights (SDRs) as service charges in 1983-84 on account of earlier drawings from the fund. The new drawings from the IMF after the enhancement of recent quota for the fund members will stand at 50 million SDRs during the current financial year.

CSO: 4600/1559

STATUS OF TRADE WITH SOCIALIST COUNTRIES DISCUSSED

Dhaka THE BANGLADESH OBSERVER in English 27 Jan 84 pp 1, 12

[Text] Despite the refusal of the Soviet Union to renew its barter trade agreement with Bangladesh, Bulgaria has started negotiations with Bangladesh officials in Sofia to revive the protocol. A Bangladesh delegation headed by Commerce and Foreign Trade Secretary reached Bulgarian capital on Tuesday last.

It may be recalled that the Soviet Union signalled a negative response to the renewal of the barter agreement which expired on December 31 last. The barter agreements with USSR, China and Bulgaria were due to be signed this year. The agreement with China has already been renewed, while the response from Soviet Union is negative. According to diplomatic sources the Soviet Union and some other East European Socialist partners have adopted this attitude in retaliation to the expulsion of some Soviet diplomats from Bangladesh recently.

The total volume of barter trade with East European countries is estimated at 14 percent of the total export and five percent of the total imports of Bangladesh. The total value of the Bangladesh exports to socialist countries through barter trade stood at Taka 206.8 crore in 1981-82 as against Taka 153.5 crore in 1980-81. The value of total imports from the socialist countries was Taka 201.8 crore in 1981-82 compared to Taka 157.8 crore in 1980-81.

According to a source of the Ministry of Commerce and Foreign Trade Bangladesh export surplus with the socialist countries of the East Europe stood at Taka 110 crore till date.

The Soviet Union and her tallies according to a diplomatic source are creating pressure on Bangladesh economy blocking the trade with us.

The bilateral arrangements that Bangladesh has entered into since liberation were mainly through barter protocols with fairly large number of socialist countries. In fact since 1971 Bangladesh has signed 65 such barter protocols under general trade agreements with USSR, China, Bulgaria, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Hungary, GDR, Yugoslavia and Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

The objectives of the barter arrangement are 1) to export items which are slow moving in cash market and 2) to put purchase and sale of some of the commodities on a more secured and predictable basis. According to a document of the Ministry of Commerce the development of trade under bilateral barter agreements have been fairly impressive between the years 1973-74 and 1981-82.

Bangladesh export under barter trade totaled Taka 9.03 billion as against import of Taka 7.95 billion. The difference is attributed to the fact that the period of barter protocol do not coincide with our financial year. The imbalance is settled by subsequent transfer of goods within the period of protocol. According to trade circle in Dhaka, the Soviet delay in renewing the barter trade agreement would seriously affect the export of jute goods and other nontraditional items.

CSO: 4600/1555

MUSLIM LEAGUE LEADER TELLS POSITION ON DIALOGUE

Dhaka THE NEW NATION in English 27 Jan 84 pp 1, 8

[Text] Muslim League (Siddiky) President, Justice B.A. Siddiky said that his party would not participate in dialogue with President and CMLA Lt. Gen. H.M. Ershad following the governments unilateral decision to hold Upazila election.

Addressing a press conference at his Dhanmondi residence yesterday the M.L. (Siddiky) Chief demanded that parliamentary elections be held before the holding of any other election in the country.

He alleged the President has deviated from his earlier commitment that announcement, if any, would be made after completion of dialogue which included among other issues holding of Upazila election and open politics.

It may be recalled that Justice Siddiky and his party leaders took part in the inaugural session of the dialogue on January 7 last in Bangabhaban.

In reply to a question, Mr Siddiky said they attended the inaugural session with the hope that it would be possible to restore democracy in the country in a peaceful manner.

Demanding withdrawal of ban on open politics he said that his party would take up programmes in order to establish people's rights if their demand was not met. When asked about their programme in this connection Justice Siddiky told the Newsmen that they would announce it when time was ripe.

Demanding parliamentary election on the basis of the suspended constitution, the M.L. Siddiky Chief said, I am dead against the Presidential form of government, and opined that the sovereign parliament would decide the form of government.

When asked to give assessment about the dialogue he said, "No fruitful result would come out if dialogue in this form is held with 72 parties of the country for 72 weeks."

Justice Siddiky said that they are maintaining contact with the political parties who declined to take part in the talks with the government.

Referring to expulsion of Soviet diplomats from the country the ML President urged the political parties and the people to be united against Indo-Soviet axis.

Commenting about a news item on the arrival of ammunition to a US citizen in Chittagong, Mr Siddiky said it is a concocted story and was designed by a vested quarter to counter the Soviet diplomats' ouster.

However, he criticised the Foreign Ministry of Bangladesh for what he termed "mishandling of the Soviet issue."

He demanded abolition of Martial Law Courts and advocated for establishment of tribunals headed by civil judges.

A.N.M. Yusuf, Senior Vice-President, Razia Faiz, Secretary General, Salahuddin Qader Chowdhury, Joint Secretary and M.A. Hannan, Organising Secretary of the party were also present in the conference.

CSO: 4600/1557

NOMINATION PROCEDURES FOR UPAZILA CHAIRMEN EXPLAINED

Dhaka THE BANGLADESH OBSERVER in English 27 Jan 84 pp 1, 12

[Text] The Election Commission on Thursday announced the procedures for nomination for the posts of Chairmen of Upazila Parishads and qualifications and disqualifications of the candidates, reports BSS.

The election to the posts of Chairman of Upazila Parishads will be held on March 24. A Press release of the Election Commission said these elections will be held according to the provisions of "the Local Government (Upazila Parishad and Upazila Administration Reorganisation) Ordinance 1982" and "the Upazila Parishad (Election of Chairman) Rules, 1983." As per provision contained in Article 4, (2) of the above mentioned Ordinance, the Chairmen of the Upazila Parishad shall be elected by direct election on the basis of adult franchise.

Article 6 (1) of "the Local Government (Upazila Parishad and Upazila Administration Reorganisation) Ordinance 1982" provides that a person shall be qualified to be elected as Chairman of a Upazila Parishad, if he is a citizen of Bangladesh he has attained the age of 25 years, and his name appears on the electoral roll for the Upazila.

Article 6 (2) of the above mentioned Ordinance provides that a person shall be disqualified for election for being a Chairman of a Upazila Parishad if--A. He is declared by a competent court to be of unsound mind. He is an undischarged insolvent, He has ceased to be a citizen of Bangladesh or has acquired the citizenship of or affirmed or acknowledged allegiance to a foreign state he has been on conviction for any criminal offence sentenced to imprisonment for a term of not less than one year unless a period of five years has elapsed since his release he holds any full time office of profit in the service of the Republic or of the Parishad concerned or of any other local authority or he is a party to a contract for work to be done for or goods to be supplied to the Parishad concerned or has otherwise any pecuniary interest in its affairs or is a dealer in essential commodities appointed by the government.

Nominations for election of Chairman to the Upazila Parishads are to be submitted in prescribed forms which will be available with the Returning Officers in due course.

Any voter of a Upazila was for the purpose of election of a Chairman for that Upazila Parishad propose or second the name of any person who is duly qualified to be elected as a Chairman.

No voter shall subscribe nomination papers either as a proposer or as a seconder in excess of only one nomination paper for election of a Chairman to be elected from a Upazila and if any voter does so all such nomination papers in excess of the requisite number in order of their receipt shall be rejected.

Every nomination paper shall be delivered on the nomination day within the specified time by the candidate or his proposer or seconder to the Returning Officer who shall acknowledge in writing the receipt of the nomination paper specifying the date and time of receipt.

The nomination paper for each candidate shall be accompanied by a treasury chalan or a bank receipt or a receipt from the Returning Officer showing deposit of a sum of five thousand Taka. No nomination paper shall be accepted by the Returning Officer unless the above mentioned deposit has been made. The head of account for the purpose of deposit is--Deposit and advances part II--deposit not bearing interest--civil deposits--deposits in connection with election.

Scrutiny of the nomination papers, filed with the Returning Officers, will be held on Wednesday the 8th of February 1984 at time to be fixed by the Returning Officer. The candidates, their election agents, proposers and seconders and one other person authorized in this behalf by each candidate may attend the scrutiny of nomination papers.

Any candidate whose nomination has been rejected by the Returning Officer after scrutiny may prefer an appeal to the Appellate Authority against the rejection within three days of the date of scrutiny.

The Deputy Commissioners have been appointed as the Appellate Authorities by the Election Commission.

An appeal against rejection of nomination shall be disposed of within three days from the date of filing of the appeal either summarily or after such inquiry as may be considered necessary and the decision taken by the Appellate Authorities on any such appeal shall be final.

The Election Commission, in a Gazette Notification, issued on January 26, 1984 has appointed Additional Deputy Commissioners to act as Returning Officers and the Assistant Commissioners (senior most) of the Upazilas to act as Assistant Returning Officers for the conduct of the ensuing elections to the office of Chairman, Upazila Parishad.

CSO: 4600/1555

ERSHAD EXPOUNDS PHILOSOPHY OF DHAKA GOVERNMENT

Dhaka THE BANGLADESH OBSERVER in English 28 Jan 84 pp 1, 16

[Excerpt] The President and Chief Martial Law Administrator, Lt Gen H.M. Ershad said on Friday, "The programme which I have given is to complete the incomplete task of Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman." Referring to the services of late President Zia he said "I also want to dedicate myself for the cause of the people."

President Ershad said this as the chief guest at the third national conference of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (pro-Dudu-Nilu) at the Shilpakala Academy on the day. Giving a call to forge unity among the democratic and patriotic forces of the country, the President said we have to build up the nation through unity shunning the path of chaos, violence and politics of division.

President Ershad said, "Our political philosophy is national independence and sovereignty, establishment of Islamic ideals, equal distribution of wealth and Bangladeshi nationalism" President Ziaur Rahman has also given us this philosophy and we must work through unity to build up a happy and prosperous Bangladesh. If we can achieve this goal, it would mean showing respect to the departed soul of Shaheed Zia, he said.

The students attending the conference supported the programme of President Ershad chanting slogans and raising hands.

"I also want to establish the democracy which President Zia wanted to establish through following his ideals" he said. Those who want to destroy the political philosophy of Bangladeshi nationalism of Zia, are enemies of the country President Ershad said, "We must resist them" he said.

The President said it was the soldier Zia who declared independence of the country from Chittagong and later as President Zia he moved from one corner of the country to the other to mitigate the sufferings of the people. "We have also taken up epoch-making reformative programmes to improve the condition of the rural people" he said. "I am sparing no pains to go from one village to another to personally see the condition of the rural people and help bring smiles on their faces by implementing various development programmes" he hoped.

President Ershad said we have to identify those who want to ruin the country through politics of procession hartal, arson and violence. Posing a question he wanted to know whether President Zia wanted such politics. Those who are threatening us of launching programmes of violence in the month of February, are not friends of the country and we have to resist them he said.

President Zia wanted to build up the villages which require local government election first, he said. The election of Union Parishad and Upazila is the election of the people and not national polls he said. Had I not given the election schedule of the Upazila, it would have meant breach of pledge to the nation, he said.

Referring to the education policy of his Government he said that a committee has been formed for its implementation. If it is not approved by the committee it would not be implemented, he said.

Listing a number of measures his Government has adopted for the benefit of the students, he said that buses have been provided for the university students, new residential halls were being constructed and better arrangements for food have been made. Posing a question he wanted to know why the students would not stand beside him.

"I also want a happy future for you which your leader wanted for you. Why you will not come with me," he asked.

"Today I am inaugurating your national conference on behalf of Shaheed President Zia who wanted to inaugurate your conference back in 1981. I feel myself honoured as you have placed my photo beside that of President Zia," he said.

President Ershad concluded his speech saying "Bangladesh Zindabad" and "President Zia Zindabad."

CSO: 4600/1559

MISSION OF PRIVATELY-OWNED OBSERVER TOLD

Dhaka THE BANGLADESH OBSERVER in English 30 Jan 84 p 5

[Article by Hamidul Huq Chowdhury: "A Pledge"]

[Text] **T**HE Observer has at long last finished a long innings of trials and tribulations experienced during the period it was under Government occupation. Freshly out of confinement lasting for over 12 years it is in a daze. It has lost much of its energy. But it begins with new determination, promising to steer itself along its chosen course from which it had been deflected by the rising winds and rolling waves.

The darkness of the dungeon into which it had been flung more than once in the past has to some extent been lifted. Now we begin to take our new responsibility and to work for the old cause as we had done before.

Although the highest court of the country gave its verdict in fa-

vour of the publishers of the Bangladesh Observer and notwithstanding the fact that after imposition of Martial Law the CMLA categorically promised restoration of the property, the government extracted a written undertaking to give up much of their claims. I had to face a lot of trouble in getting the undertaking approved by reluctant shareholders of the company just to get back the property. Otherwise, I believe, it would have been almost impossible to get the paper and the property back.

We again bring ourselves to address the challenging task of organising ourselves in the midst of a total disarray and degeneration in terms of human and mechanical resources. We are awed by what seems to be insur-

mountable odds. Nevertheless, we assure our readers and patrons that we shall try to overcome the difficulties that befell the paper. We are dazed but not blinded.

Since 1949, when our first issue was published, the Observer has relentlessly pursued a policy of neutrality in respect of all factional politics. We had built up a tradition of maintaining equidistance from rival sections without ever demonstrating any tilt. Our objective since our inception has been to secure for the people their legitimate rights, to guide the country along the path of peace, progress and happiness. We will remain within the bounds of law while constantly trying to change a bad one by every peaceful means.

The Observer has always reposed great trust and confidence in the strength of the people. In the ultimate analysis, it is the people who are the repository of all power, regardless of whether this is appreciated or not by all. We often clashed with the authorities and others in our pursuit of truth and service to the people. The only weakness of the people is that they lack the knowledge of their right. We shall endeavour to make them conscious of it.

We, as in the past, will keep aloof from power politics, and serve the real interest of the country and the people with views and news that concern them without bias.

In the wake of a leadership crisis our present endeavour is to establish Fundamental Rights and Rule of Law and to examine the new rules and regulations that have been introduced. In a situation like this we do not make any secret of the fact that our task is rendered none too easy; but that does not dim our hopes. We are con-

vinced that all elements in the country (without any exception) in their heart of hearts yearn for a return to democracy. The people themselves equipped with the knowledge and understanding of their own duty and with their regard for discipline will be able to steer the course.

We subscribe to the views that in order to be able to do good to the people the administration should find means to know the minds of the people and feel the pulse of the nation better. There is the imperative need for identifying the abuses in any form or shape that exercise the minds of the people. The Observer will play a role in the ventilation of views and opinions of the people in the larger interest of the country and also help open up greater opportunities for the amelioration of the condition of the people. Our role as a news medium will be to tell what the people should know and what others should know about us.

It is under an obligation to play the role of

a watchdog in the present circumstances. It will lend the readers a bigger forum to express themselves on matters of collective and national interests. This will, in turn, give the authority greater scope to know the problems of the people at first hand, supplemented by the support of mofussil and overseas correspondents, which will be further streamlined and revamped with this end in view. The paper will thus serve a two-way traffic.

It will keep the readers informed, expecting them to read and reciprocate, in order to forge a closer and direct link between us and the readers to ensure a comprehensive and balanced projection of problems and issues, and to present a fair, objective and adequate analysis and interpretation of the challenges. It will also offer suggestions and solutions to problems for the government to ponder and be guided by. We shall adhere to the Rule of Law, and to the need of law and order and maintenance of peace.

BRIEFS

TRAVEL CURB LIFTED--The Government has withdrawn the restrictions on foreign travel by engineers according to an office memorandum of the Ministry of Home dated Wednesday last. This supercedes all previous instructions in this regard. This withdrawal of restrictions will have a salutary effect on the unemployment of engineers of the country. There are at present over 1,400 unemployed engineers in the country. Every year over 1,200 engineers pass out from different engineering colleges and Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUEI) but of them only 400 find employment opportunities. The engineers who have joined government service or jobs in autonomous organisations will however require to obtain No Objection Certificate as per existing rule applicable to all other government servants or employees of autonomous organisations. [Text] [Dhaka THE BANGLADESH OBSERVER in English 27 Jan 84 p 1]

COMMUNISTS, AWAMI SCORED--Mr Anisuzzaman Khokan, Organising Secretary of Janadal, in a statement yesterday alleged that some political parties including Awami League and CPB were trying to divert the attention of the people by making propaganda on the cartridges brought by a foreign national for hunting birds. But Awami League and CPB did not even express their concern over the incident of bringing into the country contraband goods like radio equipment by the Soviet Embassy men, he said, He termed the statement of Awami League an expulsion of the Soviet diplomats as "amounting to antistate activity." [Text] [Dhaka THE NEW NATION in English 27 Jan 84 p 1]

IFAD LOAN--The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) has approved a new project loan worth II million dollars for small scale flood control, drainage and irrigation in Bangladesh. The project will benefit about 30,000 farming families, mostly cultivating less than three acres and indirectly a large number of landless labourers. On-farm employment will increase by 13 percent and the construction of civil works will provide about five million mandays of work. The additional annual foodgrains production will be about 33000 tons at full development. [Text] [Dhaka THE BANGLADESH OBSERVER in English 2 Feb 84 p 1]

CSO: 4600/1556

TIGHT SECURITY MEASURES MUFFLE SIKH AGITATION

Dubayy KHALEEJ TIMES in English 28 Feb 84 p 1

[Article by Geof Malone]

[Text] NEW DELHI—The Indian capital's day of action in which militant Sikhs burnt part of the constitution and a right-wing Hindu party called for a general strike passed off largely peacefully.

Heavy security was in force throughout the city and police in full riot gear guarded key points in the city centre to prevent clashes between the two communities.

The strike, which was organised by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to protest over the killings in the northern states of Punjab and Haryana, was partly successful but did not affect normal life in the city.

Buses ran as normal and offices functioned but in many areas shops, cinemas and schools were closed.

The Lieutenant Governor of Delhi, Mr Jagmohan, said the strike was totally peaceful. The president of the Delhi branch of the BJP Mr K.N. Sahani, said the response to the call was spontaneous and showed how deeply anguished people were over the violence.

He called for strong action against extremists in Punjab and Haryana.

Because of the heavy security, the all-Sikh Akali party, which has been leading the 18-month-old agitation for political and religious concessions for Sikhs, had to abandon its plans to burn a part of the Indian constitution outside the parliament building in New Delhi.

The Akalis are angered over a part of the constitution which refers to Sikhs as part of the Hindu community.

One of their demands is that Sikhs should be given separate status.

Police had guarded all entry points to Delhi and around the parliament building there were road blocks and security forces wore tin helmets and flak jackets.

In a last-minute move the Akalis switched their protest to the confines of the Gurudwara Bangla Sahib, the main Sikh temple in Delhi, about a kilometre from the parliament building.

Police also surrounded the temple, but one of the five Akali leaders who had announced they would be in Delhi managed to get inside. Mr Prakash Singh Badal, a former chief minister of Punjab and former Indian agriculture minister, said he evaded the police at the Delhi border by arriving as a truck driver.

Inside the temple Mr Badal and other Akali leaders gave fiery speeches to a crowd of about 500, denouncing the government and calling for the "rights of Sikhs."

Mr Badal and other Akalis then went to the rear of the temple and set fire to the part of the constitution. They then went outside and were arrested under the Prevention of Insult to National Honour Act. The rarely used law carried a maximum punishment of three years' imprisonment.

Police said that besides Mr Badal, those arrested were member of parliament Lehna Singh Tur, two members of the suspended Punjab legislative council, Mr Talab Singh Sandhu and Mr Daleep Singh, and Mr Harcharan Singh, described as a patron of the

Delhi Akali Dal owing allegiance to Akali president Harchand Singh Longowal.

In Chandigarh, the capital of Punjab which it shares with Haryana, four Akalis were arrested when they tore the word 'Sikh' from the relevant part of the constitution in front of the government offices.

The four had originally planned to take part in the Delhi demonstration but had been prevented from arriving by the tight security.

They were former Indian Cabinet minister Surjit Singh Barnala, agitation leader G.S. Tohra, former member of parliament Balwant Singh Ramuwalla and the acting chief of the Talwandi section of the Akali Dal, Mr Randhir Singh Cheema.

Indian president Zail Singh condemned the burning of the constitution saying it was the act of some "misguided Sikhs."

A spokesman said the President felt "anguish" over the act and that it belittled the sacrifices of Sikh martyrs in the cause of the country's independence and unity.

In Punjab a school teacher was shot dead at Faridkot, bringing to 45 the number of people killed by extremists in a week. Virtually all have been Hindus.

In Delhi, police made efforts to stop news coverage of the events at the Gurudwara Bangla Sahib.

The Khaleej Times correspondent was marched away by plainclothes police and detained for more than two hours. No reason was given for his detention.

FOREIGN GUESTS OF 10-DAY FAJR CEREMONIES VISIT EVIN PRISON

Tehran ETTELA'AT in Persian 6 Feb 84 p 3

[Text] Foreign guests participating in the special ceremonies to honor the fifth anniversary of the victory of the Islamic revolution, visited Evin prison last night, and took part in the ceremonies to honor the fifth night of the 10 days of Fajr.

In this visit, foreign guests inspected the different sections of the prison, the Martyr Kachu'i School and the measures for reforming the minds and reconstructing the thoughts of the prisoners. The guests spoke freely with the prisoners on a variety of subjects.

In ceremonies arranged for the same purpose in the prison's mourning center, the prisoners sang a number of songs, and then a prisoner from the Ansar camp in Lebanon who has recently been freed from the Zionist enemy's incarceration, described the situation in Lebanon and the conditions of prisoners in the Zionist's jails and said: "The Zionists torture the children of Islam in a variety of ways in the Ansar camp. In addition to the pulling of fingernails, connecting electricity to the body, breaking the bones of the arms and the legs and keeping them in the cold and the heat, they also use psychological torture."

He added: "The conditions here, as I see them, are incomparable and it cannot even be called a prison. Under these circumstances, it has to be called a university."

Based on the same report, one of the Lebanese guests whose child was martyred in the bombardment of the city of Ba'lbak in Lebanon, recited a poem and then, Mr Lajevardi, Tehran's Islamic Revolution Prosecutor, answered the guests' questions.

He said: "Only persons involved in armed movements against the Moslem people of Iran, belonging to a variety of Marxist mini-groups and the hypocrites, are kept in this house of detention. Prison, in the Islamic Republic's system, is for the reformation and reconstruction of the thoughts of those who have strayed."

In answer to a guest who asked: "Why don't you bring the facts and realities of this prison to the attention of the people of the world?", he said: "Imperialism's news with its extensive networks prevents the nations from hearing the truth. Although representatives from the world media have visited this prison and seen the prevailing conditions several times, each time they have misrepresented the facts and twisted the truth around."

According to the report, the guests then spoke with the prisoners and learned about prison conditions, their treatment by the Islamic Republic and their crimes and punishments from the prisoners themselves. Some of the guests, who were suffering from the effects of the poisoned atmosphere of the Western media's propaganda, in an attempt to verify or to refute their [the Western media's] claims, were looking for signs of torture on the prisoners' bodies, but after seeing the prisoner's high morale, they realized the falseness of the news and imperialism's futile attempts to discredit the revolution and the Islamic Republic in the eyes of the people of the world, and were ashamed to have had such notions.

According to the report filed by the IRNA correspondent, foreign guests, who came from different countries, showed great interest in the treatment of the prisoners by the authorities of the Islamic Republic, which is based on the liberating teachings of Islam; so much so, that none of them could hide his satisfaction with the kindness and affection that is shown the prisoners, and the fine manner with which the prisoners are received by the detention center's authorities, and the transformation of human beings who once stood against the Islamic Republic to those who are willing to give their lives for the survival of the Islamic Republic.

After being informed of what is taught at the prison, a German guest asked the prison authorities to be allowed to stay there for a few days and make use of the prison's ideological/political teachings.

Talking about his observations, Sheykh Annas Karissa, a guest from Uganda, said: "This is the first prison of its kind in the world which is being run on the principles of Islamic teachings. Imperialist countries with their alleged civilization and concern for human rights, have not seen the likes of this prison which is like a university for the prisoners. They have to come to their senses and see how Islam respects human rights."

After observing the association between the prison authorities and the prisoners, Greek guest Yannis Talakis, who was visiting Evin Prison along with other guests, said: "One of the things that has impressed me immensely is the kind treatment of the prisoners by the guards, and the lack of harsh measures and controls."

Regarding this Dr Gholam' Abbas Rajyar, a resident of Sweden, said: "Western news agencies had brainwashed me with the rumors that they spread, but after seeing the realities and hearing the facts from the prisoners themselves, and to prove my words and for a more complete description of the realities, I have produced photographs that I will show to my Moslem brothers in Sweden."

In the conclusion of the ceremonies, a Pakistani brother recited a beautiful poem of his own composition concerning the surge of the Islamic Revolution, which was well received by the audience. Then, the foreign guests participating in the ceremonies had dinner with the prisoners, and left the prison amid the prisoners' warm farewells.

It must be reiterated that the reporters from the news media of the Islamic world produced films and photographs of their visit and of what they saw in the prison, and made recordings of prisoners' descriptions of the prison conditions to take to their own people.

12386

CSO: 4640/118

IRAN

MINISTER INFORMS RED CROSS OF ITS 'BLUNDERS' IN IRAN

Tehran KEYHAN in Persian 23 Feb 84 p 22

[Text] Numerous issues have arisen in the course of the Red Cross' operations in Iran which have weakened the Islamic Republic of Iran's initial optimism regarding the International Red Cross Committee.

Following the negative propaganda that has recently appeared in the world imperialist media with regard to the cessation of operations by representatives of the International Red Cross Committee in the Islamic Republic of Iran, our country's foreign minister sent a note to the Red Cross' representation in Tehran. While enumerating part of the responsibilities of the Red Cross and the Committee's failure to carry out these responsibilities, he called upon the committee to take steps to fulfill its responsibilities in the Islamic Republic of Iran as quickly as possible.

One portion of the note said: The Islamic Republic of Iran naturally expects international organizations who consider themselves politically neutral, and especially the International Red Cross Committee, to carry out their duties pertaining to the imposed war and the people involved in it with complete impartiality and on the basis of the substance of the Geneva convention. On the basis of this expectation, the necessary directives have been issued by the government for all concerned organizations of the Islamic Republic of Iran to cooperate fully with representatives of the Red Cross by fulfilling tasks assigned by them at the earliest opportunity. Numerous issues have arisen, however, in the course of the Red Cross' operations in Iran, some of which are mentioned below, which have weakened the Islamic Republic of Iran's initial optimism with regard to the International Red Cross Committee. It is incumbent upon the International Red Cross Committee to:

1 - On the basis of the Geneva Convention and on the basis of similar laws that this organization published itself in 1940 concerning the bombed cities of World War II, immediately after

an enemy attacks cities and non-military areas, it must send a delegation to report on violations of the Convention and international law, and to report on the losses caused and the circumstances.

Unfortunately, from the beginning of the imposed war to the present, despite being aware that such attacks have martyred more than 4,600 people and wounded more than 22,000, the Red Cross has not taken the slightest step to fulfill this responsibility.

2 - In the event of repeated violations and failure on the part of the aggressor country to heed reminders from the International Red Cross, it must publicize the violations to the world.

Unfortunately, in the more than three years since the war began, such steps have not been taken, while on 20 June 1984, a delegation from the United Nations reported violations of every article of the Convention in cities being occupied and bombed by Iraq.

3 - It must review the unacceptable circumstances of more than two million war refugees, and take the necessary steps to prevent the continuation of these circumstances.

Unfortunately, the Red Cross has not paid the slightest attention to this, nor to the Iraqi refugees driven into Iran, nor to the more than 10,000 missing military and civilian personnel.

4 - It must carry out its activities in registering the names of prisoners of war in such a way that it will not cause disorder and create disturbances among the prisoner population.

Unfortunately, so far representatives of this organization have violated this point.

The International Red Cross Committee, unfortunately, has been remiss in its responsibilities concerning the four points above, which are given as examples, countless times. With regard to the inspection of bombed cities, and the issue of the use of chemical bombs by the Iraqi aggressors only during the last few months, more than six notes from the Foreign Ministry have remained unanswered. Despite this, and despite the Red Cross' failure to heed its responsibilities as described, the Islamic Republic of Iran has continuously taken the initiative in creating suitable conditions for the continuation of effective and positive activity by this organization. Since the time the representatives of the Red Cross in the Islamic Republic of Iran stopped their activities on vain and inadmissible pretexts, the Islamic Republic of Iran has sent this organization six notes

inviting it to continue fulfilling its responsibility with respect to Iraqi prisoners of war, all of which have gone unanswered.

This is at a time when Iranian prisoners in Iraq are living under the most inhumane conditions, and the Red Cross has been unable to effectively prevent the continuation of these conditions.

In view of the above, in view of the fact that even though the number of Iraqi prisoners is several times greater than the number of Iranian prisoners being held by the Iraqi regime, their living conditions are in no way comparable, and that the Islamic Republic of Iran bears this huge expense, over and above the requirements of International law, solely on the basis of Islamic beliefs regarding prisoner welfare, the natural expectation is that the International Red Cross Committee would take a greater interest in fulfilling its responsibilities.

Unfortunately, the behavior of this organization, and especially the recent statements and interviews with officials of this committee, which have been clearly in the interest of the aggressor regime of Iraq, has created concern at the international level that certain political considerations have cast a shadow over the committee, and have interfered with the fulfillment of its responsibilities in accordance with the Convention of 1945.

The Islamic Republic of Iran, while expressing regret concerning this organization's poor performance, once again, on the basis of humanitarian and Islamic considerations, and with all good intentions, calls upon the International Red Cross Committee to fulfill its responsibilities in the Islamic Republic of Iran as quickly as possible.

Obviously, the aforementioned organization will have the full cooperation of the concerned organizations in the context of its responsibilities. Otherwise, the full responsibility for all the consequences of the matter must be borne by the committee itself.

9310

CSO: 4640/130

SOVIET AMBASSADOR ASKED TO PROVE HIS CHARGES

Karachi JANG in Urdu 5 Feb 84 p 3

[Text] Soviet Ambassador to Pakistan Smirnov has this quality of expressing his views freely and informally and he puts forth his country's point of view bluntly. Recently, at a meeting in Lahore, he made many remarks about Pakistani-Afghan relations. Branding Afghan Mujahidin as bandits and terrorists, he repeated his allegations that there are 80 camps in Pakistan to help the Afghan Mujahidin and that arms for them are supplied to Lahore via Karachi.

First, let us consider the Soviet ambassador's denunciation of people waging armed struggle against the Karmal regime as bandits and terrorists. We would like to point out that the Karmal regime controls only 5 to 10 percent of the country and that the remaining 90 percent is in the hands of these bandits and terrorists, who have the support of 99 percent of the country's people. In support of the views of these bandits, 3.5 million people have crossed over into Pakistan and another 1.5 million have taken refuge in Iran. If the Soviet ambassador attaches any weight to the wishes of the majority of the people and if he has any idea of the concept of democracy, then it can be said without fear of contradiction that the Karmal regime does not represent the Afghan people. A clear and overwhelming majority is with the Mujahidin, who are opposed to the Karmal regime and who have staked their life and property on the dignity and integrity of their country. In reality, these Mujahidin are the guardians of their country's honor and it is not possible to throw dust in the eyes of the world by calling them bandits. In branding the Mujahidin as bandits, the Soviet ambassador can neither gain the goodwill of the Pakistani people nor convince the Afghan masses.

As for the allegations that there are 80 camps in Pakistan to support the Mujahidin, Pakistan's President ZiaulHaq has himself refuted this countless times. He has gone so far as to challenge the Soviet ambassador to pinpoint the location of these camps. But instead of replying the ambassador merely goes on repeating his charges. Instead of just saying that there are 80 camps in Pakistan in support of Afghan Mujahidin, it would be more appropriate for the Soviet ambassador to provide the addresses and locations of these camps so that the Pakistani people and the rest of the world may know how much truth there is in these claims.

RELEASE, BETTER TREATMENT OF POLITICAL PRISONERS DEMANDED

Karachi JANG in Urdu 5 Feb 84 p 3

[Excerpts] It is not possible to state categorically and with certainty how many political prisoners there are in Pakistani jails. The reason is that the government has not released any figures nor do political circles have the organization and resources to permit them to claim any figure to be true. Sometimes government takes the stand that there are simply no political prisoners. It is true, of course, that some leaders are being kept as guests of the government but they live in their own homes in comfort and respect. They have three square meals a day, indulge in contemplation and have no problems. They can hardly be called prisoners. Even so, there are only a few of them. The only other people in jail are the vandals and criminals and those who courted arrest, and therefore government can hardly be held liable for them. By taking this position, government absolves itself of any wrongdoing and can appear to the world as guiltless. In fact, it was the former regime that established the practice of arresting people at midnight and taking them to police stations and lockups. We, on the other hand, have shown great respect for the lives and honor of people. We have set high standards of civilized treatment. As a matter of fact, we hardly ever arrest anybody. But if someone wants to claim our protection, we cannot refuse it, and we have no way of stopping it. Despite this government stand, the fact remains that at this moment there are thousands of people in jails. A segment of the political opposition has claimed that during the recent campaign 22,000 political workers were arrested. Of these, only 3,000 have been released and the rest are still in jails. We have no way to confirm or disprove this claim. Whatever the doubts about this figure, no one can deny the existence of thousands of political prisoners across the four provinces. These people may have courted arrest or they may have been arrested by the government--this does not alter the fact that they are in jail, and they can only be described as political prisoners.

Who is a political prisoner? Anyone who goes to jail or is taken to jail for political purposes. What other reason there is for the presence of these people in jails except that they demanded the restoration of democracy and when this demand was not granted they took recourse to agitation to have their demands accepted and in the process they courted arrests. Clearly, these people are not hardened criminals. Nor are they antisocial elements. You may differ with their political philosophy, their arguments or their line of action. You may even describe their activities as illegal but their aim was and remains political and they cannot be struck off the list of political prisoners.

There are reports of several kinds of difficulties facing inmates of jails. Some of the prisoners are ill, and some are seriously ill. Many of the prisoners are being held far away from their native villages and towns as a result of which their dear ones, their children and family members find it difficult to visit them. Jail rules and regulations, conditions and the inadequacy of facilities make the life of prisoners very difficult. In some cases, in disregard of their social status, some prisoners have been classified as class C prisoners even though every political prisoner is entitled to at least class B status. Near and dear ones of many prisoners have acquainted us with the difficulties facing the inmates. Letters coming out of jails draw attention to the rules and regulations handed down from the British days and demand that government be pressured into correcting the tough treatment meted out to the prisoners. We believe that complaints from relatives of prisoners deserve attention. First, it is the duty of government to release all political prisoners indiscriminately, without delay and unconditionally as a way of improving the political climate. The official argument that some people courted arrest and that now it is for the government to decide when to release them is not an acceptable argument. The release of political workers had been going on even during foreign rule and its basis was the political atmosphere. The British Government, in an effort to gain goodwill and to normalize the political temperature, often released those prisoners who were serving sentences. The Pakistani Government has taken a decision to move toward the goal of restoring democracy and elections. In this context, there is a need for change in policies and its first demonstration should be a release of political prisoners. And until the prisoners are released orders should be given immediately to eliminate the harsh conditions imposed on them. Sick prisoners should be released or permitted to get treatment from places of their choice. All prisoners should be kept near their homes and rules for meetings between prisoners and their near and dear ones should be relaxed. These prisoners should be released immediately and without delay. Prisoners should be treated in a way that does not result in permanent bitterness.

12286

CSO: 4656/93

PAKISTAN

BRIEFS

CASE AGAINST ALLEGED TERRORIST--The Model Town police has registered a case under Section 420, 468, 471, 109 and 114 against one Mohammad Azam alleged to be a Kabul trained Al-Zulfikar terrorist alongwith Javaid Iqbal, Abdul Haq, Haji Zahid and Chaudhry Mohammad Younas councillor for preparing forged National Identity Card and passport under the fake name and address of Abdul Hafeez for accused Mohammad Azam. Mohammad Azam was alleged to be on a terrorist mission in Pakistan and wanted to leave the country after the completion of the said mission, when he was apprehended. [Text] [Lahore THE PAKISTAN TIMES in English 23 Feb 84 p 10]

CSO: 4600/407

INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT PLANNED FOR TRINCOMALEE

Dubayy KHALEEL TIMES in English 26 Feb 84 p 14

[Text] Colombo--Sri Lanka has decided to build its second international airport close to the strategic port city of Trincomalee on the north eastern coast about 176 miles from Colombo. It will cost around 15 million dollars.

The building of another international airport, particularly at Trincomalee, is part of the government's overall plan to develop this city, which sits alongside one of the largest natural harbours in South Asia and is strategically well placed in the Indian Ocean.

Trincomalee, a one time massive allied Naval base during the last world war gained prominence when it came under the command of Britain's Lord Louis Mountbatten who used it as a fall back base when Japanese troops over-ran Singapore. The port has a capacity of harbouring more than a 100 ships of any size at any one time.

After the British pulled down the Union Jack and returned the port to Sri Lanka in 1957, the only development there was the building of a flour milling complex by Singapore Prima Company.

Initial plans are to have a single 3300 metre long runway at the Trincomalee International airport but this will depend on the availability of funds and what is recommended in a feasibility study.

The airport itself will be built on a 3000 acre plot of state owned land but construction work on the airport will begin depending again on the availability of funds. Trincomalee currently has a small regional airport which is used by the Sri Lanka Air Force for light aircraft.

It was constructed by the British Air Force during the second world war. Close to the airstrip are 106 fixed roof vertical oil storage tanks also a British war facility which have a capacity to store more than a million tons of oil. [as published]

Sri Lanka has plans to lease the tank farm out to an international oil company which will refurbish it and use as an international oil terminal. Offers for the tank farm are being currently studied by the Colombo government.

Officials in Colombo said that the decision to build an international airport was taken as the entire north eastern coastal region of the island was a star tourist and resort attraction.

CSO: 4600/414

END